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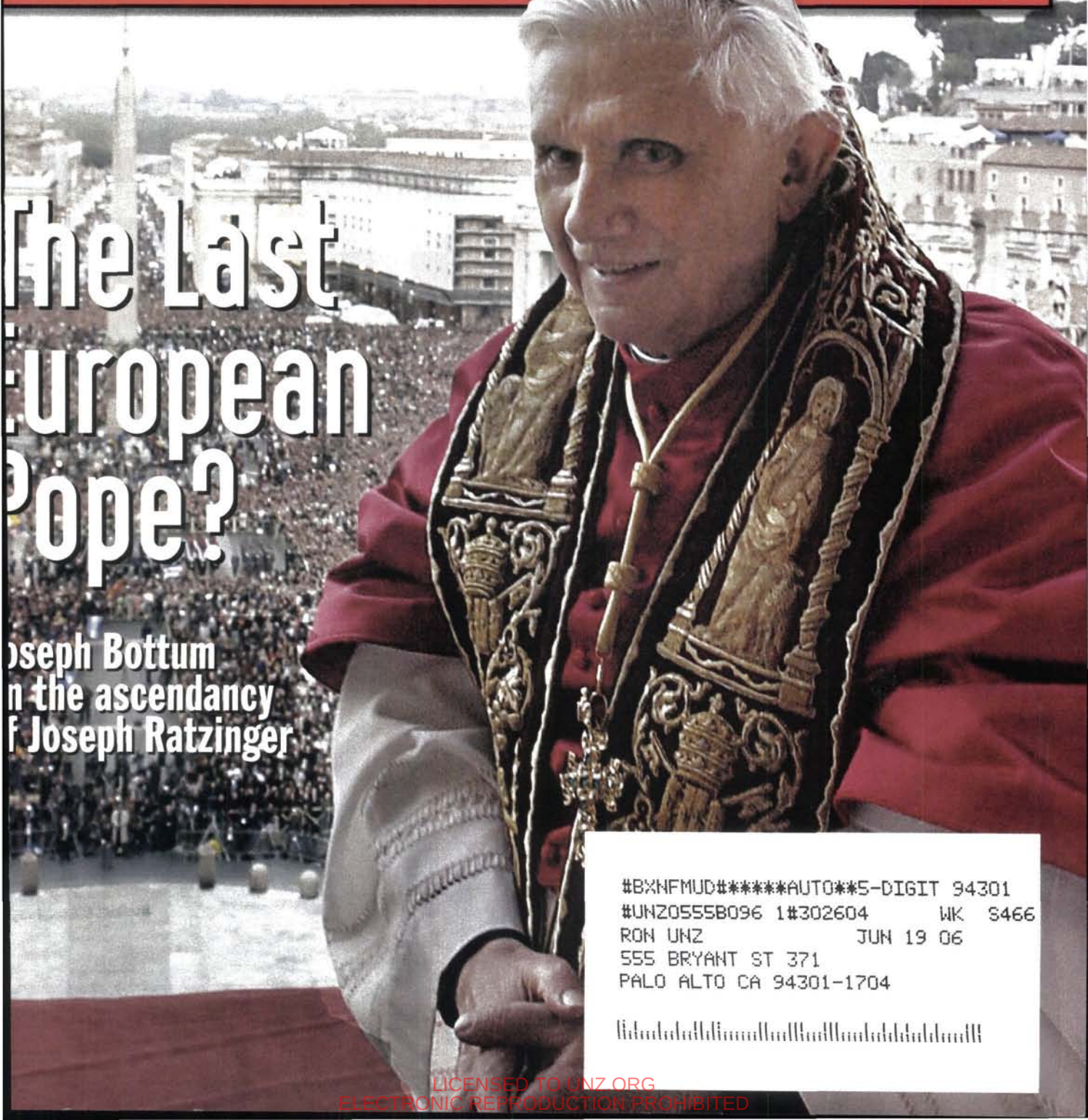
Jonathan Karl



The Last European Pope?

Joseph Bottum on the ascendancy of Joseph Ratzinger

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Seymour Hersh's Other Reality

Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter Seymour M. Hersh is paid up to $15,000 per public lecture, according to Chris Suellentrop's blockbuster profile in the April 18 issue of *New York* magazine. But based on what Suellentrop reports, the audiences Hersh addresses may want to ask for a refund.

Because, it turns out, while on stage spinning yarns, Hersh makes things up. As the *New York* headline put it, "Sy Hersh Says It's Okay to Lie (Just Not in Print)." When he's speaking, Hersh tells Suellentrop, "Sometimes I change events, dates, and places in a certain way to protect people." Which shouldn't matter, he goes on, since "I'm just talking now, I'm not writing." Put another way: "I can't fudge what I write. But I can certainly fudge what I say."

And what fudge! Suellentrop gives us a taste of the stuff Hersh "reveals" to his audience:

> Videotape of young boys being raped at Abu Ghraib. Evidence that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi may be a "composite figure" and a propaganda creation of either Iraq's Baathist insurgency or the U.S. government. The active involvement of Karl Rove and the president in "prisoner-interrogation issues." The mysterious disappearance of $1 billion, in cash, in Iraq. A threat by the administration to a TV network to cut off access to briefings in retaliation for asking Laura Bush "a very tough question about abortion."

And so forth.

Safely lodged behind the lectern, Hersh never offers any proof of his accusations. He feels he doesn't have to. "I'm just communicating another reality that I know," he says, "that for a lot of reasons having to do with, basically, someone else's ass, I'm not writing about it."

"Another reality," such as the wanton slaughter of Iraqi civilians by U.S. troops, which Hersh imagines vividly for Suellentrop:

> You're a bunch of young kids. And so maybe you pull the bodies together and you drop RPGs [rocket-propelled grenades] and you take some photographs about it because you're afraid you're gonna be investigated. And maybe somebody there tells me about what happened.

Or maybe you're an aging lefty icon who got famous reporting the My Lai massacre in Vietnam. And so maybe you're still milking your notoriety for everything it's worth. And maybe you're always imagining another scoop like My Lai, because you're afraid that on some level you've become just another old gasbag on the lecture circuit. Or maybe not; we're just talking out loud to ourself here.

Hersh, by the way, doesn't provide any evidence that the scene described above actually happened. But—as we say—this doesn't stop him. At Berkeley in October 2004, for example, he told his audience that a young soldier had called him to say that a platoon of American troops had butchered "30 or so" members of the Iraqi National Guard. Hush up, Hersh told the soldier. "You're going to get a bullet in the back." Since this massacre hasn't showed up in Hersh's print journalism, we can only assume the story fails the rigorous *New Yorker* fact-checking process.

"I get paid to do speeches," Hersh concludes. "And I'm not there to be on straight. I'm there to tell, you know, give somebody, exchange views with people."

Come to think of it, Hersh's audiences are probably getting exactly what they paid for. ♦

Anger Management

Last week on this page we took note of the low farce that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Democrats made out of the hearings into Bush appointee John Bolton's fitness to serve as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. Joe Biden, for instance, claimed to believe that it is "just not acceptable" when a government official confronts a subordinate "and reams him a new one." Barbara Boxer wondered if Bolton needed "anger management."

Well, we certainly did, after listening to Boxer and Biden. The abuse of subordinates, after all, is a tradition on Capitol Hill every bit as venerable as calling opponents you despise "honorable gentlemen." So we invited Hill staffers to rat out members who liked to "kick down," as one of Bolton's accusers put it.

Among our informers (if we can call them that without disrespect) was the celebrated Washington lawyer Victoria Toensing, who recalled, not without some nostalgia, her days as chief counsel for the Senate Intelligence Committee in the early 1980s, when it was chaired by Barry Goldwater. Second in seniority to Goldwater was the legendary New York Democrat, the late Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who had an earlier career as ambassador to the Unit-

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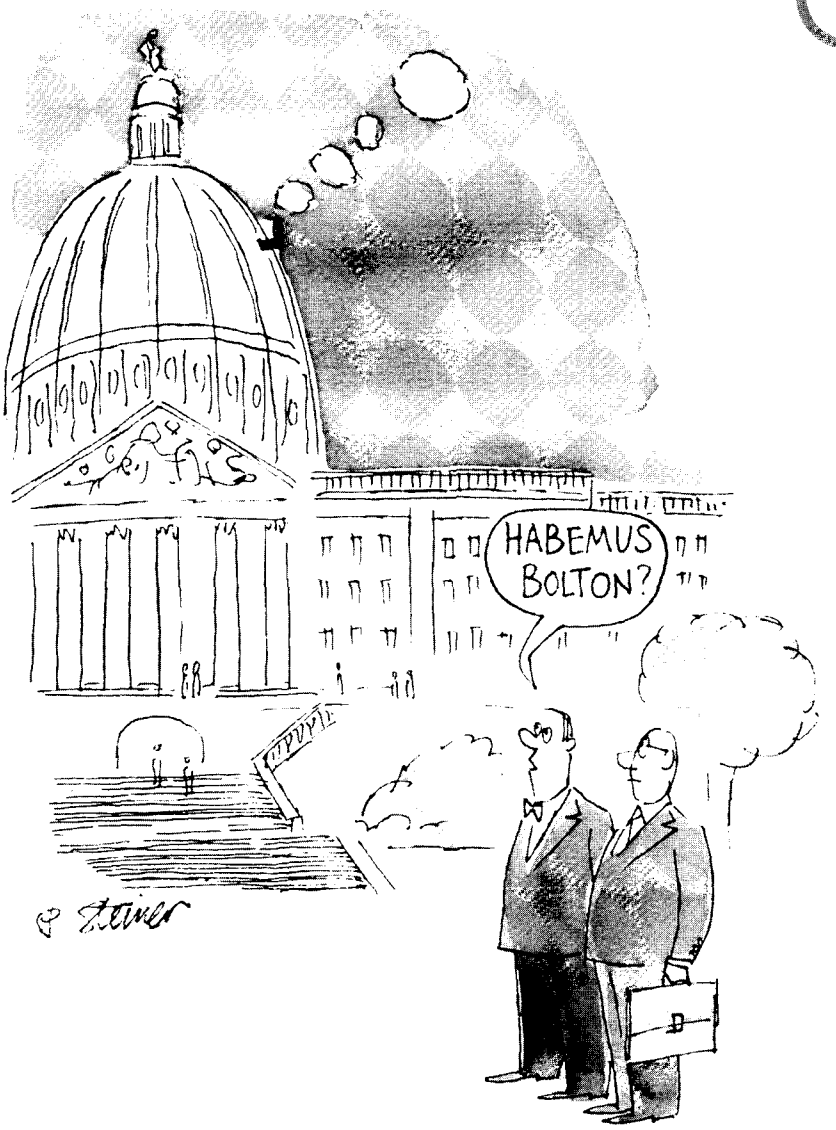

ed Nations. Indeed, as Toensing points out, because of his tough-talking, no-nonsense approach, "he was the U.N. ambassador that everyone wants to use as their model. Right? The prototype." Moynihan, you could say, kicked up, down, and sideways at the U.N., to his everlasting credit. As he famously said, when that body voted to equate Zionism with racism, the United States "does not acknowledge, it will not abide by, it will never acquiesce in this infamous act."

And as an Intelligence Committee boss, Toensing recalls, "he would call us in about something, and it would always be in the afternoon, after lunch . . . and he would just rant and rage at us about something that usually we had nothing to do with whatsoever, and then dismiss us."

Yes, as we said, it's a Washington tradition. And we want to hear more. So keep those cards and letters coming to *scrapbook@weeklystandard.com*. As noted last week, we intend to conduct this little investigation into anger management Capitol Hill style, according to the same high evidentiary standards adhered to by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee minority staff—i.e., feel free to email any dirt you've ever heard, even second hand. ♦

She Fought the Good Fight

Diane Knippers was to the liberal hierarchy of America's mainline Protestant churches what Václav Havel was to the Communist bosses of Czechoslovakia—not only a thorn in their side, but the leader of a growing moral and spiritual opposition.

As head of the Institute on Religion and Democracy for 12 years, she took on the often lonely job of restoring the mainline denominations to a traditional, Bible-based faith. Rather than battle on behalf of classical Christianity, millions simply fled the mainline to join the Catholic Church or the Southern Baptists or a nondenominational church where the faith was not diluted or trendy.

Knippers stayed and fought. She was soft-spoken and encouraging, and she turned IRD into a visible and influential force. The deeply politicized leaders of the Episcopal and Methodist and Presbyterian churches feared her, and they should have. She was relentless in exposing their apostasies and instrumental in organizing a populist revolution in the pews against them.

"She always kept her eye on the ball," says Michael Cromartie, director of the Evangelical Studies Project at the Ethics and Public Policy Center. Havel's legacy is a free Czech Republic. Knippers's legacy will be a vibrant Protestantism free from the grip of churchmen who thought Christianity was just another name for their left-wing crusades. Diane Knippers died last week at 53. ♦

Help Wanted

Contributing editor Charles Krauthammer is seeking a research assistant. Send a résumé to *jobs@charleskrauthammer.com*. ♦

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Casual

Clash of Civilization

I recently admitted to my wife that I'm battling an addiction. The terrible irony of it is that she was the one who put me in temptation's path. Ever since she introduced me to Sid Meier, I've been hooked on Civilization, a computer game he created in 1991.

Civilization is what's known as a "God" game—one in which the player runs the affairs of men. Now in its third incarnation, it's among the most popular computer games in the world. Here's how it works.

The player selects a civilization to rule over, out of 16 possibilities including Greek, Persian, Roman, Aztec, Iroquois, French, and even American. If you pick Persian civilization, your name is Xerxes; Roman, you're Caesar; American, you're Lincoln. The game begins around 4000 B.C. and can go as far as 2050. The objective is to cultivate your fledgling culture, play to its strengths (for example, the Babylonians are religious, the Zulus are expansionist), and take over the world from neighboring rivals—played by the computer—either by cultural invasion or military conquest.

My wife, far from being a Civ fanatic, is a gentle player who prefers cultural victory, in which foreign cities defect to you without a shot being fired. But two writer friends of mine see domination as the only way. One in particular is so ruthless that if an occupied city's inhabitants are rioting, he'll choose to starve them. "Either that or just raze the city," he advises. There are other ways to win as well, such as prevail in a space race or get your peers to pick you to be U.N. secretary general—talk about a fantasy!

Over the course of the centuries, each civilization evolves according to your choices. You might choose to trade the alphabet for knowledge of masonry, say, or have your scientists study astronomy rather than metallurgy. Eventually each civilization can produce a distinctive "special unit" giving it a slight edge, such as the Egyptian war chariot or the Greek hoplite or the samurai or the F-15. Each civilization also competes to build the various wonders of the world, often with interesting results, as when the Chinese build the Pyramids and the Egyptians build the Great Wall. You can mastermind the Hanging Gardens, or the Colossus of Rhodes, or even the Pentagon. The possibilities are endless.

Darren Gygi

Now doesn't reading all this make you want to play the game and just geek-out? I try to convince myself and others that there's nothing wrong with this—with being a Civ fanatic. I've tried holding forth on the game's sociopolitical implications. The response is inevitably, "And how old are you?" Besides that, who am I trying to fool? Certainly not my better half.

Try telling your wife in a nonchalant manner while she's making dinner, "Honey, I think I'll just go play a little bit on the computer." It's shameful and humiliating. This is what led me ultimately to conceal my game time from her. Sometimes I'd tell her I'd just been on the computer for five minutes when in fact it was closer to five hours (after which I'd suddenly realize our clothes were still at the cleaners). Other times I'd say I was just tidying things up in the den, which now resembles the last scene in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. No kidding, there are two American Airline vouchers somewhere beneath the piles of books and papers. But I simply don't have time to find them. Right now, as Joan of Arc, I am contemplating sending my knights to attack the English in order to seize their precious saltpeter mines so I can start recruiting musketeers. But in the back of my mind I'm beginning to feel like the comic book guy from *The Simpsons*—the one who wears the T-shirt that says "Dungeon Master."

What nags me is the fear that I may be losing touch with reality. This impelled me not only to confess to my wife, but also to write this column. I know she's going to read it, and so will my in-laws and all my friends, and then there will be no denying the extent of my problem. They say admitting you have a problem is the first step on the road to recovery.

Maybe the two of us can work together to beat my miserable condition and get on with our lives. Clear out the den. Pick up our clothes from the cleaners. Open a joint checking account. Find those free plane tickets. The point of this exercise was obviously not to give free publicity to the legendary Sid Meier or the brilliant minds at his company, Firaxis, which is currently developing Civilization IV—one of whose features, by the way, will be "advanced multiplayer gameplay." This means I can now take on someone besides the computer. My feeling is, if my wife will just play against me, we can keep things under control. I'm sure she'll be thrilled.

Victorino Matus

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Glitzkrieg

Regarding Noemie Emery's "Vanity of Vanities" (April 4): I ended my 20-year subscription to *Vanity Fair* just in time for the November election. I simply could not bear to read any more of their constant Bush-bashing.

Since then, I have received numerous requests from *Vanity Fair* to resubscribe. Some of their offers practically amounted to *giving* me the magazine. I ignored them all, but was tempted at times to write an explanation of why I was ending what used to be quite an enjoyable reading experience.

Now I know exactly what to do the next time I get a request to restart my subscription: I'll just send *Vanity Fair* a copy of Emery's article. It conveys my feelings so much more eloquently than I could.

Donna Ardizzone
Staten Island, NY

The Virginia 116th

Vance Serchuk and Tom Donnelly have written a great article about the "forgotten" war in Afghanistan ("Nation Building, After All," April 11).

I have just one quibble. The 116th Infantry is a *regiment* of the Virginia National Guard, not a "division." It is one of the most storied and famous regiments of the U.S. Army, being descended from the "Stonewall Brigade" and still called by that nickname.

The 116th also had the distinct and tragic duty to land first on Omaha Beach on D-Day as part of the 29th Infantry Division, suffering horrible casualties, including over 20 young men from Bedford, Virginia, killed.

It's gratifying to see them continuing their legacy of service in Afghanistan.

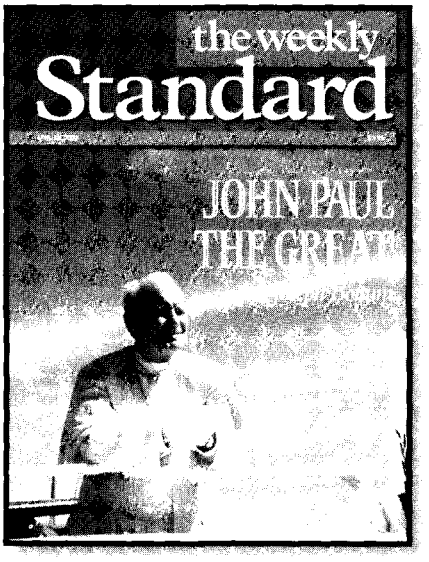
Bill Brockman
Atlanta, GA

Papal Legacy

As Joseph Bottum notes ("John Paul the Great," April 18), the *New York Times* and the so-called mainstream media "saw the pope only through the lens of current social politics." The light had entered the darkness and the darkness comprehended it not.

Already the attacks on the legacy of Pope John Paul II have begun, with critics saying he was a "conservative" who held back the winds of change that had begun to blow in the late 1970s when his papacy began. But for John Paul II there were no conservatives or liberals. There was only truth.

Like Jesus, John Paul II was born to give witness to the truth. And like Pontius Pilate, an incredulous and increasingly secular populace and media responded by asking, "What is truth?" The vicar of Christ, the lineal descendant of Peter, told them, and in the process revitalized the world's oldest Christian Church and made it relevant in a world



where the lure of moral relativism is strong.

Few outside the Catholic Church—and not enough within—could understand his marching orders, the same orders first given by Christ to Peter, that whatever he loosed on earth would be loosed in heaven, and whatever he held bound would be held bound. John Paul II believed in moral absolutes—not popular opinion, trends, or polls—and attracted the youth looking for answers in a world that had none.

He resisted the calls of many to "modernize" the Catholic Church, to make it more "popular" and appealing. He never wavered from his belief in a "culture of life." He was roundly attacked for his opposition to birth control and the ordination of women and his belief that homosexuality was a sin. He believed some truths were eternal, and that faith in those truths could transform individual lives and human society.

During his lifetime, John Paul II experienced the ravages of both Nazi and Communist tyranny. The media have concentrated on his role in the downfall of communism, but his focus was more on liberating the human spirit. Indeed, John Paul II showed us how to live and die with true dignity.

He was a rock, the rock upon which Christ built his church, and neither hell, the media, nor popular secular opinion will prevail against it.

Daniel John Sobieski
Chicago, IL

Joseph Bottum has written a most wonderful eulogy of our recently deceased Pope John Paul II.

Bottum gathers together many of John Paul II's greatest lessons, achievements, and writings, noting the impact of these and minimizing his few not-quite-achieved goals, so as to present to us the works and deeds of a great man.

Despite their nitpicking attempts, the pope's naysayers cannot denigrate the impact of John Paul II on modern history. The world is very much the better for his having instructed us in faith and Christian action.

Glenn Waterman
Bainbridge Island, WA

Sense of Entitlement

Stephen Moore's "Losing the Social Security Battle" (April 18) reminded me of the television ad campaign that the American Association of Retired Persons has lately been running (at least here in Colorado) against Social Security reform.

Part of the political problem with Social Security and other entitlement reform is that the "entitled" fraction of the population, which is receiving transfer payments from the working segment of the population, has, if not a voting majority, an immensely strong contingent that currently firms up the Democrats' eroding base.

These people are in a position to vote

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themselves bread and circuses, then blame the Republicans when the money for bread and circuses, national defense, public health, and road construction is all spent.

Bleak prospect, eh?

VANCE P. FRICKEY
Denver, CO

WHY NO DIVORCE?

THANK YOU SO MUCH for Eric Cohen's "How Liberalism Failed Terri Schiavo" (April 4), which differentiated "procedural" liberalism from "ideological" liberalism.

The distinction is enormously enlightening to me, distressed as I have been these last weeks by a certain rigidity among my progressive friends regarding the Schiavo case. I knew that the content of their "protect Terri's right to die" stance seemed at odds with something, but it never struck me before reading Cohen's article that the "something" was procedural liberalism—the means for getting to one's end (one's judgment) on matters such as this.

I have just one critical comment. Cohen writes, "And while one would think that divorce was the obvious solution, this was more than Michael Schiavo apparently could bear, since it would require a definitive act of betrayal instead of a supposed demonstration of loyalty to Terri's wishes."

I agree that Michael Schiavo's refusal to simply divorce Terri and allow her parents to pick up the tab for her medical care stemmed in part from fear of appearing to act more in his own interest than in hers.

But on the other hand, divorce would have raised eyebrows and perhaps requirements for reimbursement vis-a-vis his acceptance of a million-dollar settlement for her care, which he agreed to provide throughout his "natural life." Medicaid had already paid for Terri's care 18 months longer than planned, and soon someone would have had to pay for her hospice (approximately $5,000 per month).

I'm not sure how divorce would have affected Michael Schiavo's responsibility in this area, but this too raises the question of money's role in what had been advertised as a selfless choice to act as his wife's proxy.

TERESA WHITEHURST
Watertown, MA

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI

I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED the piece by Joseph Epstein on Sol M. Linowitz ("Remembering the Ambassador," April 4). However, I take exception to Epstein's statement that Ezra Pound, Alexander Woolcott, and Elihu Root were Hamilton College's "other, odd-trio, notable graduates."

Actually, for its very small size, Hamilton has produced an incredible number of "notable" men who became very influential in their fields.

Some notable Hamiltonians who immediately come to mind include former United States vice president James Schoolcraft Sherman, behavioral psychologist B.F. Skinner, abolitionist Theodore Dwight Weld, portraitist Daniel Huntington, and the founders of pharmaceutical giant Bristol-Myers, William Bristol and John Myers.

ERIC HANNIS
Hamilton '90
Woodbridge, VA

RED DAWNING

IN "PROFESSORS OF DENIAL" (March 21) Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes claim that Alexander Vassiliev's libel suit loss had little to do with "the merits of his work" (with Allen Weinstein in *The Haunted Wood*).

On the contrary, the trial made manifest *The Haunted Wood*'s flaws and errors. Vassiliev did not even try to refute defense charges of the book's falsehoods. Having fallen out with his coauthor, he contended instead that he was not to blame.

Vassiliev's newly introduced Anatoly Gorsky memo, clearly at odds with much in *The Haunted Wood*, hurt rather than helped his case, partly because he could not accept the Klehr and Haynes view that it was nothing but a "damning list of spies."

DAVID LOWENTHAL
Berkeley, CA

I CONTINUE TO APPLAUD the efforts of Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes in setting the historical record straight regarding Communist activities in the United States.

From my own experience working as a historian at Sarah Lawrence College—where one of my first colleagues was Gerda Lerner and another was a close friend of Alger Hiss—I know all too well how deeply entrenched these old loyalties remain, regardless of what new evidence emerges.

JEFFERSON ADAMS
Bronxville, NY

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The Borking of Bolton

Hegel remarks somewhere that all great, world-historical facts and personages occur, as it were, twice. He has forgotten to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce.

—*Karl Marx*

The misrepresentation of Robert Bork's views and character in 1987, and his subsequent defeat by the Senate for a Supreme Court seat, may not have risen quite to the level of tragedy. But a serious blow was delivered to the political health of the nation, and to the prospects for restoring sound constitutionalism to the Supreme Court.

The assault on John Bolton, on the other hand, seems to be a farce. The notion that bureaucratic infighting and occasional abruptness of manner should disqualify one from high office is laughable. Unable to defeat Bolton in a debate on the merits of the foreign policies he has advocated or implemented, the Democrats, the media, and some in the foreign policy establishment have resorted to a childish form of character assassination. Bolton disagreed with—he even disliked!—a couple of bureaucrats. He challenged them. But no one has really accused Bolton of doing anything fundamentally inappropriate. In fact, so far as anyone can tell, there seem to have been almost no formal management complaints filed against him—and very few informal ones—in his 16 years in government, which is fairly amazing.

Bolton's accusers want to send the message that it's a career-ender if you take on the bureaucracy aggressively on behalf of the president.

But it is ridiculous to spend time dealing with these charges. Indeed, I suspect even the anti-Bush Doctrine Republican senators on the Foreign Relations Committee will ultimately be too embarrassed to hang a "No" vote on such flimsy scaffolding. And do the Democrats—the party of Richard Holbrooke and Madeleine Albright—really want to have as a new standard for exclusion from high office whether an official has ever lost his or her temper? For future government jobs, perhaps the Democrats should add to the job description: Only girlie men need apply.

But to dismiss the assault on Bolton as farcical and inconsequential is to miss its real meaning, and its impact if successful. True, if Bolton is not confirmed, another Bush-doctrine believer will be nominated for U.N. ambassador, and, under Condoleezza Rice's direction, the Bush foreign-policy caravan will move on.

But that's not all this fight is about. Bolton's accusers want to send the message that it's okay, perhaps, to agree with a conservative president's policies—but it's a career-ender if you take on the bureaucracy or the establishment aggressively on behalf of the president.

In this respect, the fight over Bolton is like the fight over Bork. One hoped-for effect of Bork's defeat was to deter possible candidates for the Court from even considering certain judicial interpretations—just as the assault, in different circumstances, on Lawrence Summers at Harvard is intended to rule out of bounds the raising of certain questions in the academy. Bork's defeat had real consequences: 18 years of intellectual mediocrity and constitutional incoherence from the Supreme Court. Only now do we have the prospect of once again advancing a constitutionalist reformation for the courts.

Similarly, if the Bolton nomination is lost, there will be real consequences, as presidential appointees start shying away from tough decisions, confrontations with the permanent foreign policy bureaucracy, and "controversial" ideas so as not to be "Boltoned." Republicans lost the Bork fight—partly through failures of nerve and intelligence—and the country has paid a price in constitutional jurisprudence. Now, however, there is a Republican Congress and a determined president—and also, perhaps, a greater willingness to undertake such fights among conservatives. A good thing, too, for we could pay almost as great a price in foreign policy if the Borking of Bolton is allowed to succeed.

—*William Kristol*

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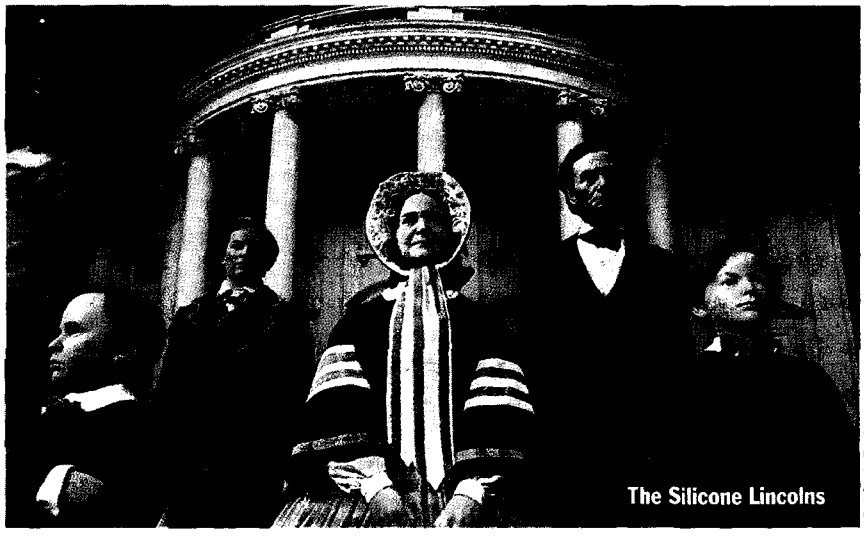
Dedicated to the Proposition . . .

That not all museums are created equal.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON



The Silicone Lincolns

AP / Seth Perlman

Springfield, Illinois

IN THE WINDOW of the Osco Drugstore, on the south side of the Old Courthouse Square here—three doors down from where Abraham Lincoln practiced law, 20 yards from where he delivered the "House Divided" speech, eight blocks from where he boarded the train to Washington at the dawn of the Civil War and bid farewell to his hometown forever—Kelsie Wilson of Virden High School has hung a portrait of Lincoln made out of toast. It's the product of a painstaking process involving polyurethane, white bread, aluminum foil, and a blowtorch. The likeness is uncanny, if slightly charred.

Kelsie's portrait deserves mention because it might otherwise be lost to the ages, given all the commotion surrounding Springfield last week. After nearly 20 years of planning, fundraising, and political back-and-forthing, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum officially opened with four days of festivities and citywide hoopla. President Bush flew in to give his blessing, along with a speech whose great eloquence and subtlety were soon swallowed up in the general excitement. The world may little note nor long remember what Bush said here, but it can never forget what's been done here.

Built at a cost of more than $100 million, the Lincoln museum represents the latest and most elaborate effort of American history buffs to reinvigorate popular interest in the country's past and make it accessible to an indifferent population. That's not the sole motivation, of course. Historical scholarship will benefit, since the library adjoining the museum at last gives a home to the state of Illinois's dazzling collection of Lincoln documents and artifacts. And there's an economic angle, too. The residents of Springfield, whose recent hard times show through the acres of empty storefronts downtown, will now enjoy a new employer, a splendid tourist attraction, and a massive transfer of wealth from their taxpaying fellow countrymen, who paid for almost everything. Other towns and villages throughout central Illinois hope Springfield's benefits will trickle down, giving them something to count on besides ethanol.

But it's the museum's play for widespread populist appeal that's drawn the most attention, and which promises to have the longest-lasting effect. The museum holds more than 40,000 square feet of exhibit space, making it far larger than any other presidential library and nearly the equal of the largest history museums. Unlike those museums, however, the Lincoln museum embodies a revolutionary principle; it stands indeed as a kind of indictment of those other museums. A promotional video, released before the museum's opening, puts it well: "Ordinary museums," says the narrator, "take wonderful objects from the living past and imprison them in row upon row of glass boxes." Here we see grainy pictures of bored museum-goers slouching through galleries. "Typical museum galleries are bland, empty rooms that house these objects rather than enhance our appreciation of them." Suddenly on the video there's a *swoooosh!* like the kind they use on Fox News to keep their viewers awake, followed by a wash of uplifting, energetic music: "That's why the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum had to be something completely different! Here we are reinventing the very concept of the presidential library."

It's a grand claim but an accurate one, too, and the video shows you how: The screen fills with a happy montage of actors and filmmakers, studio musicians and puppeteers and costumers, and you realize you've been taken from the world of traditional museums, where the intent is to inform and elevate, into the realm of show business, where the goal is entertainment above all. Reading and

Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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watching its promotional materials, you can be forgiven for assuming the Lincoln museum is dedicated to the now inescapable proposition that every venue and institution in America, from ballparks to doctor's offices to movies, should be pitched to the intelligence of an easily distracted 13-year-old boy.

As it turns out, the museum's effect is not so strident. It's in a low-slung building of Egyptian marble the color of ochre, taking up a full city block. Greeting you in the large sky-lit atrium are life-size silicone dummies of Lincoln and his family. Just beyond them, other historical figures loiter on a near-scale reproduction of the White House portico: Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, Ulysses S. Grant, and, in an eerie memento mori, John Wilkes Booth, looking sinister. The figures are only slightly cartoonish, and they don't move, thank God, unlike those herky-jerky animatrons in Disney World's Hall of Presidents. From the atrium you turn to the left or to the right to embark on one of two "Journeys." Journey One takes you through a log cabin into a series of galleries depicting Lincoln's early life; Journey Two, which you enter through the White House portico, shows the Civil War years.

Lush orchestral music follows you as you walk from room to room, alternately chipper or somber as the era requires, sometimes joined by disembodied voices. In some galleries, the walls tilt, as they do in Disney's Haunted Mansion. The attention to detail seems endless: The leaves of a plexiglass tree overhanging the cabin's chimney show singe marks. There are thunderclaps and rain storms, twittering birds and booming cannon. This isn't just a museum, say museum spokesmen. It is "an immersive experience—a blend of showmanship and scholarship," as the museum's director, Richard Norton Smith, puts it. Few 13-year-olds, even the most narcoleptic, will grow drowsy.

Historians and history buffs are supposed to be stuffy people. It is a mark of the desperate straits they find themselves in—with interest in history fading, and historical ignorance growing—that scarcely any of them have stepped forward to criticize the museum's approach as lightweight or "dumbed-down." There have been critics: two, by my count, which is just close enough to a real controversy for the *New York Times* to announce that a real controversy exists, as it did in a story last fall, "Fitting or Not, a Lincoln Tribute Moves Forward." In it, the editor of the collected papers of Ulysses S. Grant, John Y. Simon, declared his opposition to "the Disney touch in the Lincoln Museum. . . . When you have priceless documents and important letters, let's showcase them instead of the rubber Lincolns." The museum, he said, would be better called "Six Flags over Lincoln."

The sting of Simon's criticism was balmed by the fact that he hadn't yet actually seen the museum he was criticizing. A more damaging review was offered a few days before last week's grand opening by Blair Kamin, the *Chicago Tribune*'s Pulitzer Prize-winning architecture critic. "The museum," Kamin wrote, "is an architectural flop that turns Lincoln's life into the storyline for a mawkish indoor theme park."

Kamin's review was so harsh, and its prominent appearance in the state's most important media outlet so potentially devastating, that the local newspaper, the *State Journal-Register*, even ran an article about it, reprinting several of its ugly paragraphs as a kind of warning of what to expect from the cosmopolitans up north. Locals were quick to respond with letters to the editor. "Who is Blair Kamin?" wrote one. "What is the Pulitzer Prize? Sounds like 'expert' stuff." Headlines over the other letters made the same point: "Disappointed to see Kamin review in SJ-R"; "Museum will impress visitors"; "High School senior very impressed." Even the local alternative weekly, reliably left-wing and generally skeptical of boosterism, was ticked off.

"I kept waiting to feel the kind of disdain that Kamin expressed," wrote a columnist for *Illinois Times*, who had toured the museum, "and that feeling never came. Maybe I'm just not smart enough to be offended by rubber mannequins if they're teaching me something I didn't already know."

Museum officials hope the museum itself stands as the best rebuttal to huffy critics. Its scholarly bona fides are hard to discredit. Though an incurable showman, Smith is also the author of excellent biographies of George Washington, Thomas Dewey, and Robert McCormick; the museum's major-domo is Tom Schwartz, Illinois state historian and probably the country's most astute Lincoln scholar. He assembled a panel of Lincoln experts to oversee exhibits as they were designed and to ensure that no standards of accuracy or taste were breached. Their efforts are best seen in the thousands of words of wall text offered to visitors as they move from gallery to gallery, gawking at the special effects. Traditional museum elements aren't ignored entirely. Even amid the recreations and life-sized simulations, there's a reassuring emphasis on *stuff*: dazzling artifacts like Lincoln's stovepipe hat and shaving mirror; the gloves Mary Todd Lincoln wore to Ford's Theater, now bloodstained; a Gettysburg Address written out in Lincoln's own hand.

Other history museums are closely watching to see whether the Lincoln museum's experiment in "immersive experiences" has the desired results in rising attendance and revived public interest. "The whole point of the museum is to make Lincoln matter," Smith says. Who wouldn't sympathize with such a noble pursuit? If there's a lesson here, and a cause for worry, it is that the never-ending quest to secure the wandering attentions of the American public will require ever greater extravagances—that history in the public mind will become more and more a matter of the dazzling, the anomalous, the unexpected, the unusual. If that's the case, the only good news is that Kelsie Wilson of Virden High School, with her talent for toast and the torch, will never be out of work. ♦

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Senatorial Discourtesy

The Foreign Relations Committee plays trivial pursuit. BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

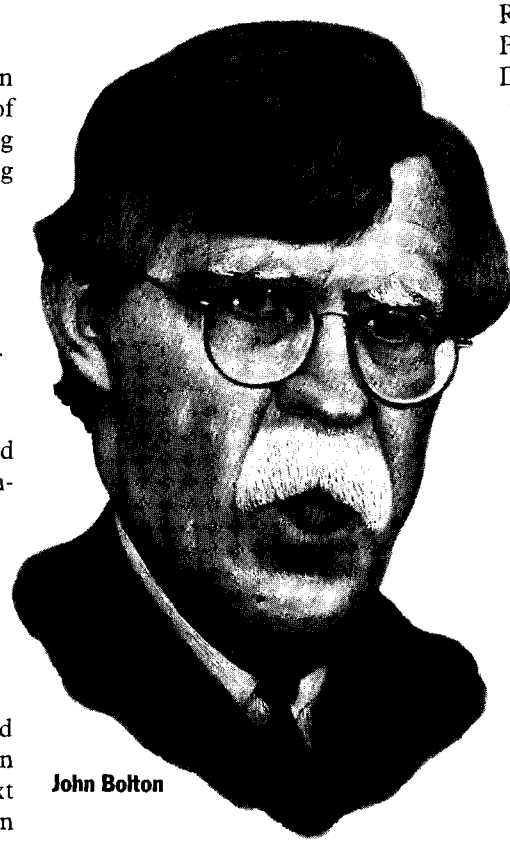
AFTER a long and distinguished career as a lawyer, an arms negotiator, a think tanker, and a diplomat, John Bolton may see his nomination to be U.S. ambassador to the United Nations hinge on whether or not he was mean in Kyrgyzstan in 1994.

No kidding.

Senate Democrats on the Foreign Relations Committee spent much of last Tuesday afternoon shouting down their opponents, gesticulating wildly, interrupting speakers, and making unsubstantiated claims—all of this in an effort to delay a vote on the Bolton nomination. He is unfit for the job, they claim, because over the course of his career Bolton is alleged to have shouted down his opponents, gesticulated wildly, interrupted speakers, and made unsubstantiated claims. Washington at its finest.

The committee had been set to send the Bolton nomination to the entire Senate Tuesday by voting along party lines (10 Republicans, 8 Democrats) to recommend confirmation. With a Republican majority in the Senate, this would virtually guarantee that Bolton would be George W. Bush's next envoy to the U.N. Two Republican senators who had previously expressed reservations about supporting Bolton, Lincoln Chafee and Chuck Hagel, were on board. Democrats on the committee had let it be known that they would employ procedural gimmicks to delay the vote. But committee chairman Richard Lugar, a Republican, was determined to hold the vote, and the White House was confident.

By Friday, however, everything had changed. There had been no vote on Bolton. A third Republican on the committee was nervous about the nominee. The morning papers were filled with reports that one of Bush's former top advisers, Colin Powell, was quietly undermining the president's pick. And there was Kyrgyzstan.



John Bolton

Illustration by Earl Keleny

Political scientists wishing to understand what drives voter cynicism ought to get a tape of Tuesday's hearing. Among the many bizarre moments: Barbara Boxer lecturing Dick Lugar on Senate decorum; John Kerry scolding Norm Coleman for citing news reports in debate, then himself citing an item from the *New York Times*; Christopher Dodd conceding that his objections to Bolton have "nothing to do with substantive disagreements"; and, finally, a spirited debate about whether former Senator Claiborne Pell is dead or alive. (A quick check of *www.deadoraliveinfo.com* and the *Providence Journal* suggests the Rhode Island Democrat is still with us.)

The two previous days of hearings, which included hours of testimony from Bolton himself, had not been enough to convince any of the Republicans that they should oppose President Bush's nominee. So Democrats introduced new allegations. Senator Biden read to the committee from a letter written by Melody Townsel, a public relations consultant from Dallas, Texas.

> When I was dispatching a letter to AID [the Agency for International Development], my hell began. Mr. Bolton proceeded to chase me through the halls of a Russian hotel, throwing things at me, shoving threatening letters under my door, and genuinely behaving like a mad man. I eventually retreated to my hotel room and stayed there. Mr. Bolton then routinely visited me to pound on the door and shout threats.

Biden continued reading from the letter.

> I returned to my project in Kyrgyzstan to find that John Bolton had preceded me by two days. Why? To meet with every other AID team leader as well as the U.S. Foreign Service official, claiming that I was under investigation for misuse of funds and likely was facing jail time. As USAID can confirm, nothing was further from the truth.

Biden finished reading and addressed his colleagues. "That's what she alleges. I don't know if they're all true or not. . . . As I've

Stephen F. Hayes is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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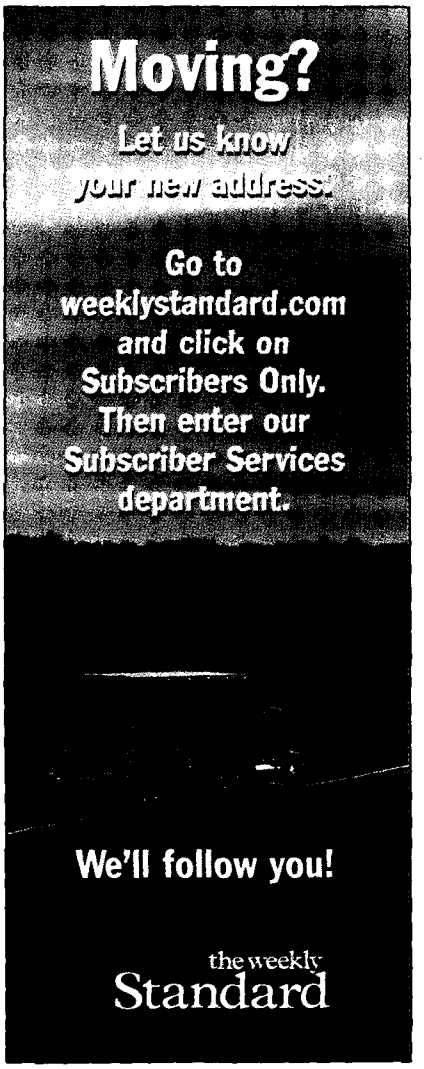
said in recent days, my staff and other staffs have received numbers of allegations about the nominee and his behavior. They are not substantiated. I emphasize, again, they're only allegations."

That's important. Allegations from the previous two days of Bolton hearings—that Bolton had pressured intelligence analysts or sought to reassign those with whom he disagreed—were not enough to compel any of the committee's 10 Republicans to oppose his nomination. Committee members had had a week to consider that testimony, and both Hagel and Chafee indicated that they were prepared to support Bolton.

(Allegations that Bolton had made an inordinate number of requests from the National Security Agency to see names of U.S. officials mentioned in the agency's intercepts were addressed by Lt. General Michael Hayden, head of the NSA, in testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee on April 14, 2005. "The requests from Secretary Bolton were not of such a number that they came to my attention," Hayden testified.)



But George Voinovich, Ohio Republican, had not attended the previous hearings on the Bolton nomination. He was apparently so concerned by the unsubstantiated allegations made against Bolton that he asked Lugar to delay the vote. "I've heard enough today that I don't feel comfortable about voting for Mr. Bolton," Voinovich declared.

His words stunned his colleagues. "There was a lot of drama when Senator Voinovich announced that he wanted more time," said Senator George Allen, Republican from Virginia and a Bolton supporter, in an interview the following day. "He had not been at all these other hearings and I've been at them. I guess he missed a lot of this."

Minnesota Republican Norm Coleman, who has emerged as the Senate's leading voice on U.N. reform, was seated next to Voinovich at the hearing. When Voinovich finished his remarks, Coleman leaned over to speak to his colleague. "I told him that everything that's being said here today by the Democrats, there's another perspective," says Coleman. "I offered to sit down with him and go over the record with him."

The delay could be a problem. Not because Melody Townsel's allegations are compelling. They're not. In the days since she first aired her grievances, more information has come to light. Townsel is a Democratic activist who founded the Dallas, Texas, chapter of Mothers Opposing Bush. Her allegations were immediately challenged and convincingly refuted by four of her colleagues, including Jayant Kolatra, owner of the firm that employed Townsel and a longtime contributor to Democrats.

Kolatra disputed her account of the alleged interactions and offered a possible explanation for her hostility toward Bolton.

> Ms. Townsel's recollection of what transpired, ten years later, is impossible to square with the fact[s]. Mr. Bolton was not engaged by our firm to have any contact with her on any issue related to her activities in Kyrgyzstan. In fact, Mr. Bolton later became our legal counsel to represent our interests before the U.S. government in response to Ms. Townsel's attempt to try to grab our contract [for herself]. Her claims against Mr. Bolton make no sense but are consistent with her belligerent attitudes toward others.

Rather, the delay could be a problem because it gives Bolton's opponents at least two weeks to pressure Lincoln Chafee into changing his vote. (In fact, both sides in the debate have begun intense lobbying efforts. A conservative PAC called "Move America Forward" has taken out radio ads blasting Voinovich, and others have launched *www.confirm-bolton.com.*) But the White House is optimistic not just that both Voinovich and Hagel will eventually support Bolton. They believe Chafee will stay on board, even though he is a Republican in a heavily Democratic state and is up for reelection in 2006. According to his spokesman, Steve Hourahan, Chafee will take another look at Bolton.

"He's not going to have any comments about whether he's more likely or less likely to support the nomination," says Hourahan. "He was prepared to support the nominee and vote yes. But he heard more information at that hearing and wants to vet it more completely. If the allegations are actually true, then they'll talk about it. If they're not, it's important to know that, so when Bolton goes to the U.N. he won't have this hanging over his head."

With a committee vote scheduled for May 12, Bolton will have it hanging over his head for the next couple of weeks. ♦

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A Social Security Quagmire?

Here's an exit strategy for Bush.

BY FRED BARNES

PRESIDENT BUSH needs an exit strategy on Social Security. With luck, he may never have to use it. There's still a chance a sweeping reform bill will pass this year. But despite Bush's valiant efforts to sell Congress and the nation on the idea of modernizing Social Security, the prospects are dim. History will surely vindicate Bush for trying to solve a serious national problem before it becomes a staggering mess. What's required now, however, is that he be ready to accept defeat in a manner that saves Republicans from losses in the 2006 election and allows him to pursue the rest of his agenda effectively.

The president has campaigned for reform with little help from congressional Republicans and in the face of demagogic hostility from Democrats. He raised public awareness of the financial abyss Social Security is falling into and the promise of personal retirement accounts. But that hasn't been enough to stir strong national support—quite the contrary. As Bush himself wrote in his 1999 campaign book, *A Charge To Keep*, "It's hard to win votes for massive reform unless there is a crisis." With Social Security, the crisis arrives in 2017 when the system goes into the red. That's at least two presidencies away.

With only one of the 44 Democratic senators willing to cooperate on Social Security, it's hard to see how a reform measure can pass. This is particularly true since none of the Democrats faces pressure at home to work with the president on the issue. Instead, Democrats have been able to oppose Bush's reform drive, offer no alternative, and do so with impunity. Many congressional Republicans are understandably leery of embracing the issue this year.

Meanwhile, Bush's focus on Social Security reform has exacted a political cost. The president's foreign policy has become stunningly successful and the economy is strong and growing despite soaring gas prices and a shaky stock market. Yet his job performance rating in nearly every poll is 50 percent or less. What's the reason? It's certainly not Bush's limited involvement in the Terri Schiavo case. And gas prices have been stuck at about $2.00 a gallon for only a few weeks. No, it must be Social Security.

If Bush is forced to accept defeat on Social Security, it's important he do it the right way. If he's petulant, it will only make things worse. And if he says the fight isn't over yet and he's going to try again in the next Congress to push through a reform measure, it will only make life easier for Democrats. They've become completely reactionary and have nothing to campaign on in 2006. Keeping Social Security reform alive would give them an issue to run on—or rather against.

But Bush can deny them that issue with the right exit strategy. He could say he tried his best to alert Americans to the coming crisis in Social Security, and that Democrats not only opposed him in the most partisan and irresponsible fashion possible but failed to present a plan of their own for modernizing the system. Sadly, he could add, the matter must now be left to future presidents and Congresses.

This approach has several advantages. It would spare Republicans a 2006 campaign dominated by Social Security. Most House Republicans would rather run on other issues—taxes, gay marriage, national security, judges—which are more likely to help them avoid the usual fate of a party with a president in his sixth year in office. The average numbers of seats lost by a president's party in the sixth year of his administration are, roughly, 28 in the House and 7 in the Senate.

It would also ease the strain that Bush's emphasis on Social Security has put on the conservative red states. The population of these states tends to be older and poorer than that of the liberal blue states. And it's been among lower income and older Americans that Bush's reform pitch has especially failed to catch on.

Most important, Bush could turn to issues with a brighter future. Foremost among them would be tax reform and making his already-enacted tax cuts permanent. The president's tax reform commission will issue a recommendation for radically overhauling the tax code. That could be the basis for a powerful campaign issue for Republicans, unless it were overshadowed by Social Security.

Bush campaigned last year to make his tax cuts permanent, but dropped the idea in 2005 lest it interfere with reaching a compromise on Social Security reform. By locking in the tax cuts, particularly the deep reduction in the tax on stock dividends, Bush might strengthen the stock market. Without a negative spillover effect from losing on Social Security, he would have a better chance of success on the other parts of his agenda as well.

Of course, the president may not require an exit strategy. He and his chief adviser, Karl Rove, have been amazingly successful in winning on issues where they were expected to lose. Bush's discipline and determination have reaped benefits and might again. After all, Social Security reform hasn't even reached the stage of congressional hearings yet. Still, the odds on winning are long. So the smart move now is to find a way to minimize the damage from a possible defeat. ♦

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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Learning to Love the Filibuster

Now that it stops conservatives, liberals think it's a good thing. BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY Americans read the Federalist Papers, their 19th-century grandchildren, the Lincoln-Douglas debates. To learn about the momentous struggle over the future of the U.S. judiciary, 21st-century Americans can watch "Save Phil," an Internet cartoon currently showing at *www.SavePhil.com*. Protagonist Phil A. Buster is an anthropomorphized megaphone with fashionable blue sneakers, white Michael Jackson gloves, and large, expressive eyes. As cartoon mascots go, Phil is derivative: He looks like the offspring of Helping Hand, the Hamburger Helper icon, and Oven Mitt, who stumps for the Arby's chain. But what Phil lacks in originality he makes up for in spunk, as he tries to whip up outrage at Senate Republicans' attempts to end the filibuster (get it?) of judicial nominees.

The cartoon is an allegory. "It's the job of checks and balances to make sure that no one gets too much influence," Phil says, "but there are a few politicians who want to get rid of checks and balances by squashing little ol' me." At this point a giant, steel-gray robot, gnashing his jagged metal teeth and flailing his metal pincers, emerges from the Capitol dome like a nightmarish jack-in-the-box and yells: "No checks! No balances! One . . . party . . . rule!" The unnamed robot, whose dark suit and red tie recall a certain Senate majority leader, chases Phil and his friends Checks and Balanz through the city streets and into the suburbs. Checks, in dancing shoes and elegant satin gloves, falls behind; so too Balanz, but who can blame her? She's wearing heels.

Yet Phil A. Buster escapes, because ordinary Americans—uneasily eyeing the pursuit from the safety of their homes—flood their senators' offices with faxes and phone messages. Swamped by the deluge of paper, the evil robot can hardly move; he trips and falls, exploding into a million pieces. And therein lies the lesson: "If people tell the politicians to play fair and not change the rules," Phil says, "we can save checks and balances." Fade to black.

Since his April 5 unveiling by the Alliance for Justice—the liberal group that learned its chops opposing Robert Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court—Phil and his friends have remained cult figures, but the marketing campaign has just begun. Last Thursday there was a "Save the Filibuster" rally at Georgetown University law school. Volunteers passed out buttons with pictures of the gang—Phil A. Buster, Checks, and Balanz—and handed out *savephil.com* T-shirts.

The rally had many fathers—or mothers, or legally sanctioned guardians, as the case may be. The Coalition for a Fair and Independent Judiciary, a consortium of groups opposed to President Bush's judicial nominees, organized it and booked the room, a spacious wood-paneled hall on the 12th floor of the Gewirz Student Center. On April 20 the press office of the Democratic National Committee sent an email inviting everyone to the law school to hear a recruitment pitch from the managing partners of the firm Kennedy, Durbin, Schumer & Lieberman.

Those who arrived early watched men in jean shorts and black T-shirts construct a wrought-iron riser, draped in blue cloth, for the television crews. The room was filled with light, and rock music, accented with horns and keyboards, played in the background. A door led to a balcony overlooking the law school campus—a small cluster of glass and brick buildings occupying several blocks in an empty and decayed part of Washington not far from Union Station. At the far end of the room a small stage was flanked by signs reading "Protect Our Democracy: Preserve Checks and Balances."

The students trickled in. Most had backpacks, swollen with books, slung over one or both shoulders. The first arrivals were shy and stuck to the room's walls, like boys at a middle school dance. But once more people showed up and the music switched to Norah Jones, they began mingling. You could hear laughter in all directions. One Georgetown undergraduate said she had "an open mind" about the filibuster, and came to the rally just wanting "to check it out."

Volunteers passed out signs. Most were simple marker-on-posterboard concoctions: "Stop the Partisan Power Grab" and "Save Our Courts" scrawled in orange and lime green Crayola. Others were slick and professional; laminated in black, red, and gold: "Never Go Back! Save Roe!" Representatives from the Feminist Majority Foundation had brought these; when complimented on having the nicest signs in the room, they giggled politely.

"They did a pretty effective color handout campaign," said a third-year law student, referring to the rally's organizers. "They handed out the flyers the other day," he went on, "when there was a bunch of free beer out on the quad." He paused. "That's smart. Me, I'm just star-

Matthew Continetti is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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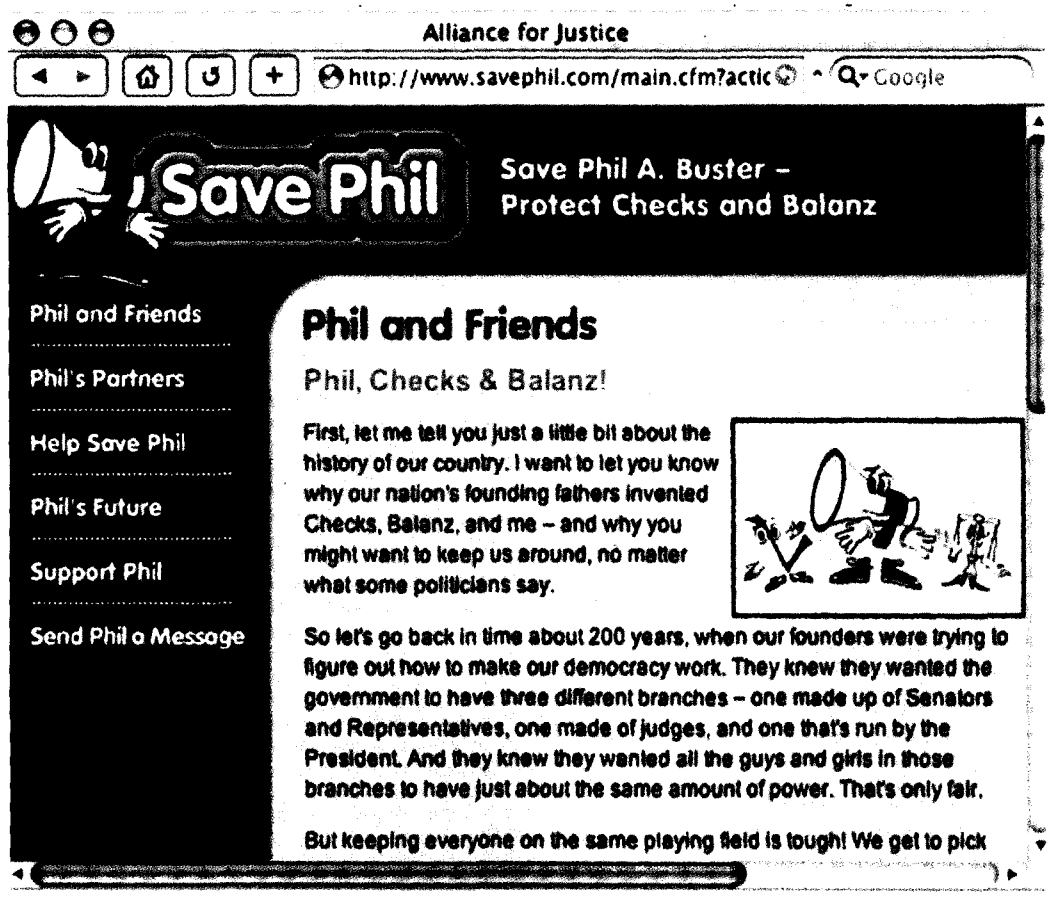
struck—you know, like, Ted Kennedy, WOW!"

He was about to be disappointed. When the senators took the stage Kennedy was missing; later, after the rally was over, a flack from the Coalition for a Fair and Independent Judiciary said that the senior senator from Massachusetts had been "tied up in committee." Yet Schumer, Lieberman, and Durbin showed up, accompanied by Father Robert Drinan, the ex-Democratic congressman from Massachusetts who's now a professor at Georgetown. The eminences were introduced by Barry Junker, a student at Georgetown Law, and Andrea Irwin, a law student at American University.



Once the introductions were over, Schumer, his tie loosened, played the pedant. "Let's start with a little history," he said. In 1999, President Bush promised groups that were "way, way, out there"—he pointed in the distance—that, if elected, they could choose the Bush administration's court nominees. "Most of Bill Clinton's nominees tended to be moderate," Schumer said. But Bush's picks—again he pointed—were "far out." He gave some examples.

"One said that slavery was God's gift to white people," he said.

Boos.

"One said that the purpose of a woman was to be subjugated to her man."

More boos.

"One said"—he paused, barely containing his shock—"there should be . . . *no zoning laws*."

The crowd emitted a collective gasp.

Don't give up the fight, Schumer exhorted. "We're actually winning the hearts and minds of the American people." He raised his eyebrows, as if he were surprised.

A few students slipped out of the room. Outside it started to rain.

"Don't you think Chuck Schumer would make a great law professor?" Lieberman asked. This got a lot of laughs, so Lieberman entered his borscht-belt mode. He called Father Drinan "one of the great faith-based initiatives." Then he smiled, leaned back, and said, "This is a great crowd."

"I never thought I'd live to see the day where we held a rally in favor of checks and balances," he continued. From the expressions on people's faces, he wasn't the only one. Lieberman kept his remarks short, invoking the Bible—"Justice, justice shalt thou do"—and issuing a warning: "There is no guarantee," he said, "the Republicans will remain the majority in the Senate forever."

Durbin, who is less famous than Lieberman and Schumer, introduced himself using the confessional language of an AA meeting. "My name is Dick Durbin," he said. "And I am living proof that there is life after Georgetown Law School." The students cheered, but quieted when Durbin went on to deliver a fiery speech on the "constitutional crisis" that awaits us if the Republicans end judicial filibusters. Once Durbin finished, the 100 or so students moved toward the elevators. One of them, who didn't want to be quoted in THE WEEKLY STANDARD, fearing prospective employers might read his name in these pages, expressed ambivalence. It didn't really matter, he said, whether Majority Leader Frist deployed the nuclear option.

How's that? I asked.

Well, he said, the corners of his mouth curling upward into a faintly sinister grin, "Almost everything that happens in Washington ends up being good for lawyers." ♦

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It Didn't Start with Dolly

Human cloning is closer than you think.

BY WESLEY J. SMITH

HERE'S AN EASY pop quiz: What's the name of the first cloned mammal? If you answered, "Dolly," that would be . . . *wrong*.

Wrong? But wasn't Dolly the sheep touted by the media as the first mammal ever made "asexually" through the cell nuclear transfer cloning process? Yes, but there are a lot of things you hear from the scientific/media establishment that are not exactly accurate.

The first cloned mammals to be brought into being "asexually" via cell nuclear transfer cloning and gestated through birth were lambs born nearly two years *before* Dolly. As reported by Ian Wilmut and his team in the March 7, 1996, *Nature*, they took the cell nuclei out of sheep embryo cells, placed each into a sheep egg that had had its own nucleus removed, fused them, and thereby generated cloned sheep embryos.

Wilmut's team then implanted their embryos into ewes, resulting in five live births. Two lambs survived. The scientists announced this breakthrough as follows: "Here we provide the first report . . . of live mammalian offspring following nuclear transfer from an established cell line." Wilmut explicitly identified the lambs as "cloned."

The only difference between these earlier cloned sheep and Dolly was that the first lambs were made asexually using cells taken from sheep embryos, while Dolly was made asexually from a cell taken from an adult ewe. But the cell nuclear transfer cloning process in both experiments was the same. Indeed, in their famous February 27, 1997, announcement of Dolly, Wilmut and his team stated that the "first offspring" to be "born after nuclear transfer" had been achieved previously.

Ditto and Neti

CORBIS / Joyce Mejia Ingram

Why is this of interest? Because, the same line of experiments that culminated in the birth of Dolly is already well under way with primates. Which means human cloning is closer to reality than most people realize.

Efforts to ban human cloning are commonly greeted with sighs of exasperation from the big biotech spin machine. Yes, the scientists and their flacks say, sheep have been cloned to birth. So, too, have cats, pigs, and mice. But not primates, the closest genetic relatives to man. This means that human reproductive cloning will almost surely never work. Thus, bioethics spokesman-in-chief Arthur Caplan stated in a 2003 article published on *MSNBC.com*:

> Despite a lot of effort, no one has managed to clone an adult monkey or any other primate. Nearly all experts on primate cloning believe that monkeys and human beings will never be cloned because the biology of primate reproduction is simply unlike that of cats, goats, sheep and mice.

This argument is resorted to with increasing frequency by scientists testifying before legislative bodies in favor of explicitly legalizing human therapeutic cloning (creating cloned embryos to be destroyed in medical research or treatments). Their point is that since biological barriers seem to prevent cloned embryos from surviving to birth, these "products of nuclear transfer" lack basic human potential and therefore should not be considered a form of human life. And if they are not human life, there are no moral or ethical reasons to oppose therapeutic cloning.

Tell this to legislators with no background in the history of biotechnological research and it has a ring of plausibility. They may not know that ten years ago most scientists believed all mammalian cloning was impossible. But that point aside, the assertion that reproductive cloning in primates cannot be done is just plain wrong. Indeed, it has already been accomplished.

The first two cloned primate births were reported in a 1997 article entitled, "Rhesus Monkeys Produced by Nuclear Transfer," published in the peer-reviewed journal *Biology of Reproduction*. They were cute, too. The article included a picture of the cloned monkey babies (named Ditto and Neti) hugging each other, with the caption: "Rhesus monkey infants produced by nuclear transfer." A genetic analysis of the infants "provided definite proof of the success of

Wesley J. Smith is a senior fellow at the Discovery Institute and author, most recently, of Consumer's Guide to a Brave New World.

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nuclear transfer technology." So much for the impossibility of primate reproductive cloning.

Cloning advocates will no doubt retort that the monkey babies were manufactured using not *adult* monkey cells but the nuclei of cells extracted from monkey embryos. This is true, but so what? It is indisputable that these cloned monkey babies were created asexually—that is, through cell nuclear transfer technology—just as the first cloned lambs brought to birth by Ian Wilmut were created asexually using cells from sheep embryos.

With the principle established that cloned primates can indeed be brought to birth, at least in some circumstances, achieving the birth of primates made from adult cells should be merely a matter of overcoming technical obstacles—as it was with Ian Wilmut's cloned sheep. To be sure, these difficulties are far more daunting in primates than they were in sheep, and may take years to surmount. Still, the birth of cloned monkey babies is comparable to the Wright Brothers' success at Kitty Hawk: Once man knew for sure that he could fly, the only barrier between an awkward biplane and a supersonic jet was the development of sufficient aeronautical expertise.

Even now, primate cloning technology is moving forward, albeit very slowly and with great difficulty. For example, in 2002, the same primate research laboratory involved in creating Ditto and Neti reported progress in producing cloned monkey embryos from more developed fetal cells, though not yet in establishing a pregnancy with these embryos. Perhaps more significantly, according to a 2004 report at *Nature.com*, monkey pregnancies with cloned embryos made from adult cell nuclei have now been maintained for up to a month. Demonstrating how human and primate cloning advances boost one another, *Nature.com* reported that these more successful primate reproductive cloning experiments used the same nuclear transfer technique discovered by the South Korean scientists who created the first cloned human embryos.

If we adopt the scientists' own logic and extrapolate the results from primate cloning to that which can be expected with humans, it means that unless society outlaws all human cloning, it is only a matter of time till the first cloned baby is on the way.

It also means that if birthing cloned human babies is technically possible—which the primate studies seem to demonstrate—then cloned human embryos are indeed a form of human life that some scientists plan to create as a commodity to be harvested and destroyed. The reason Big Biotech and cloning apologists are spending so much time trying to redefine these cloned embryos as something less than human is so that the rest of us will meekly go along. ♦

Saying 'Non' to Chirac

The French balk at the European constitution.

BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

"THIS CONSTITUTION," said French president Jacques Chirac in mid-April, "is in its way, a daughter of French thought." He was talking about the 448-article constitutional treaty (the U.S. Constitution has 7 articles) that is meant to bind the 25 countries of the European Union into something like a superstate. And he was right about the French part. Ever since France, Germany, Italy, and the Low Countries united in a common market half a century ago, Europe-wide cooperation has taken place on France's terms. This has been partly due to the diffidence of postwar Germany, partly to the prowess of France's governing classes. France's clout has diminished with the addition of new countries from the former Soviet bloc, but the E.U. is still its handiwork. Now that the E.U. is getting a permanent constitution, it is not surprising that a large European country is finally complaining. What is surprising is that that large European country is France.

All 25 countries must ratify the constitutional treaty to bring it into force. Most contented themselves with a parliamentary vote. Chirac has promised France a referendum, to be held on May 29. Until recently, it looked like a formality. When a poll in mid-March showed a narrow majority for a "No" vote, many wondered if it was a fluke. Since then, however, French disapproval of "Europe" has crept forward. By mid-April it was steady at 53 percent. Chirac decided to spend some of the political capital he had accumulated in several decades at the top of national politics—not to mention several weeks in 2003 as the head of the global coalition against the Iraq war. He would take his case to the country via television, in an evening of frank discussion with the "youth of France"—80 members of the very constituency that was supposed to benefit most from the building of a united Europe, but among whom skepticism of the E.U. was running highest.

Since many opponents of the constitutional treaty fretted over *délocalisation*—jobs moving abroad to the E.U.'s less expensive new member countries—Chirac was in a position

Christopher Caldwell is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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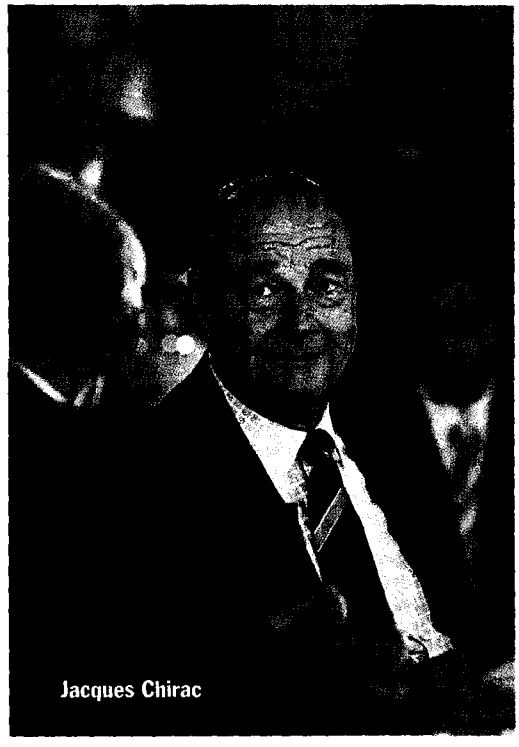
analogous to that of Al Gore in 1993, when he went on *Larry King Live* to debate Ross Perot over NAFTA. But Chirac's job was tougher. Economist Hans-Werner Sinn of the Munich-based Institute for Economic Research (IFO) recently found that labor costs in the 10 new E.U. member states were *one-seventh* of those in western Germany. And this for well-trained, well-educated Hungarian and Slovak labor. The result is a great deal of insecurity for young workers everywhere in Western Europe, but particularly in countries with unreformed welfare states. In France, unemployment is at 22 percent for people under 25. Some of them resort to crime, many of the smartest emigrate to London or Silicon Valley, and others work on the black market. And that is how, midway through his television appearance, Chirac walked into a damaging exchange over job security:

> *Student:* I have to work to pay for my studies. I'm at the Tours technical institute, in social work.
> *Moderator:* What kind of job?
> *Student:* Actually, I work off the books.
> *Moderator:* Okay, off the books. Why?
> *Chirac (laughing):* We don't need the details. He was making a joke, everyone can see that.
> *Student:* It may make you laugh. It doesn't make me laugh.

Chirac had one other big problem. Among Europe's leaders, he has been the most ardent backer of Turkey's candidacy for membership in the E.U., a candidacy which French voters oppose with more obduracy than those of any other Western European country. Chirac's Turkey policy came at zero political cost back in the 1990s, but since then, two political developments have undone it. First, to the astonishment of most E.U. leaders, Turkey has actually undertaken the democratic reforms that the E.U. made a precondition of its candidacy. Second, Western Europeans have been panicked by the flight of jobs to Eastern Europe. And Turkey, with wages that are lower still, will, by the time of its projected admission to the E.U., be the largest country in Europe.

Chirac exited the evening like Perot, not like Gore. Opposition to the E.U. constitution actually rose after his intervention, according to overnight polling—from 53 percent to 56 percent. What may have been most unnerving to Chirac is how few people felt they needed to hear his views on France's most important constitutional debate in almost 50 years. According to the daily *Libération*, the broadcast got only 7.4 million viewers nationwide, nosing past Clint Eastwood's *Pale Rider*, which got 6.4 million on another channel. Among the 15-to-34 age group that was Chirac's target demographic, the president's appearance was clobbered by *Nouvelle Star*, the French equivalent of *American Idol*, which took 33.4 percent of the viewing audience, considerably more than Chirac's 21.5 percent.


Jacques Chirac

AP / Patrick Kovarik

Since the Iraq war, Chirac's popularity has followed the same downward spiral from dizzying heights that the elder George Bush's did after the Gulf war. Chirac, though, sought to recapture a bit of the old magic by suggesting that the best argument for passing the E.U. constitution was that the Americans (and the British) dislike it. Should France vote "No" on the constitution, Chirac warned, "the free-market trend will spread. What do the Anglo-Saxon countries want, particularly the United States? They want us to stop this European construction, which risks creating a Europe that will be stronger and capable of defending itself."

France may not be turning into a nation of free-marketers and Yankee-lovers, but it is stunning to see how little purchase such arguments now have, how tired the public considers them. People are looking elsewhere for answers. Today, the leading source of information on the European constitution is not any of the daily newspapers but Etienne Chouard, who teaches *classes de brevet de technicien supérieur* (French for "shop") at a high school in Marseilles. In the past few weeks, Chouard's website (*http://etienne.chouard.free.fr*) has turned into a rallying point, a sort of low-tech French Drudge Report, full of simple republican sentiments. "I believe that it is fundamentally undemocratic to propose a constitution that is so difficult to read," Chouard writes.

The constitutional treaty is looking a bit like the last utopian gasp of the French generation of 1968. The more people get to know it, the more closely they read it, the less they seem to like it. After Chirac's failure on TV, former president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who authored the constitution in consultation with European bureaucracies, went on *One Hundred Minutes to Convince*, France's *Nightline*, to try to save the day. "It's easy to read," he pleaded. "Limpid, rather beautifully written . . . " Without cracking a smile, he urged his readers to spend an evening reading the first 60 articles.

Indeed. Once you read those, you won't be able to put it down. ♦

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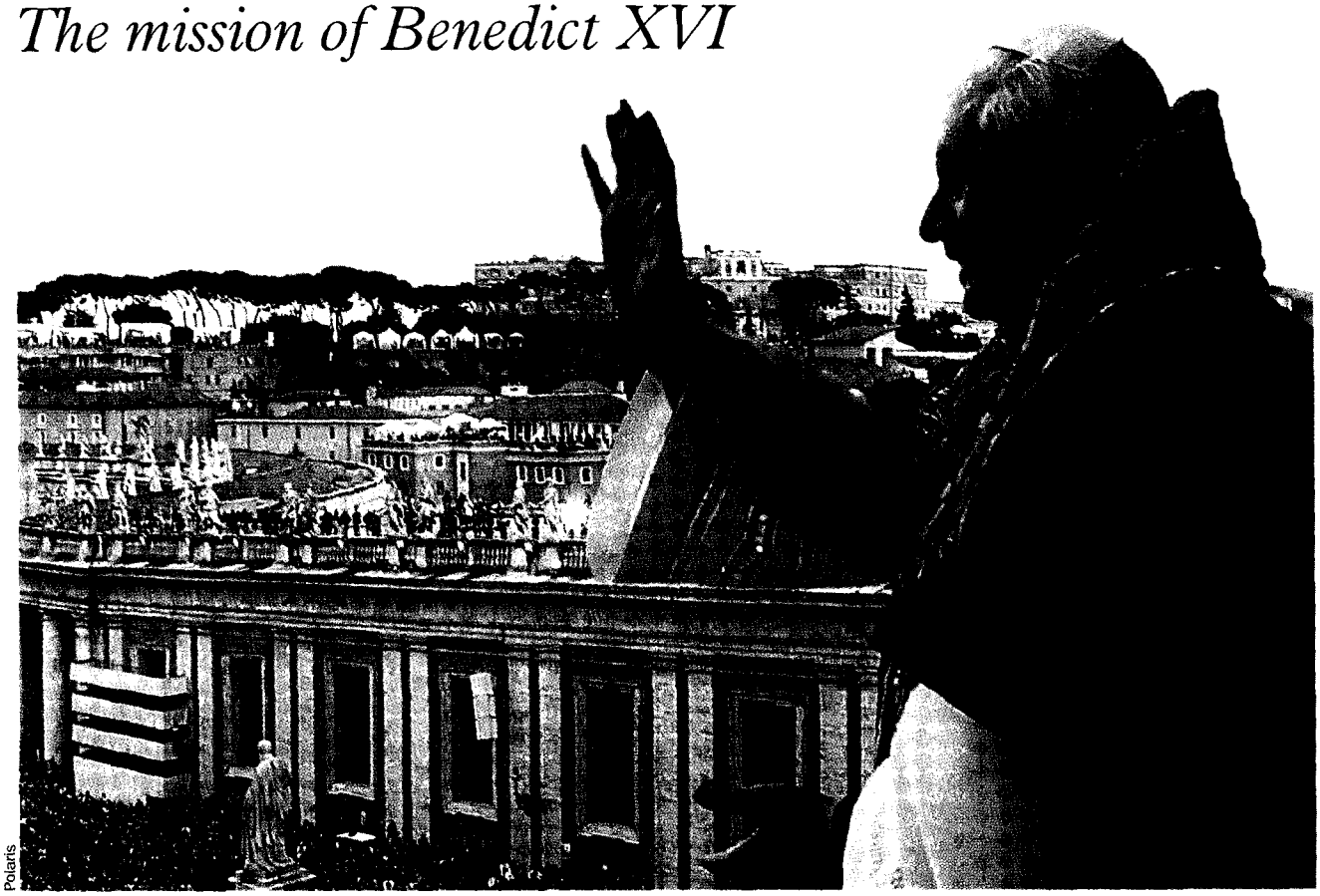
The Last European Pope?

The mission of Benedict XVI



Polaris

By Joseph Bottum

A failing civilization can't be argued out of its failing. It can be led, perhaps, or inspired, or converted and reformed. But argument requires the application of universal truths to the particular facts of the moment, and when a culture is tumbling downward, all its truths and facts—indeed, the whole *idea* of truth and fact and argument—are exactly what its people increasingly disbelieve.

Does anyone doubt that Western Europe is tumbling downward? It cannot summon the will to reproduce itself. It has aborted and contracepted its birthrate down toward demographic disaster: perhaps 1.4 children per couple across the western end of the continent, when simple replacement requires a rate around 2.1. It can discover neither how to absorb nor how to halt the waves of Islamic immigrants swamping its cities, and it has proved supine in the face of those immigrants' anti-Semitism, anti-Christianism, and even anti-Europeanism.

Meanwhile, Western Europe's economies are soft, its unemployment rates are shocking, and its emerging continent-wide government is elitist and antidemocratic. Its people are hedonists and materialists, its soccer clubs are nativist militias in waiting, its churches are empty, and—well, that's the problem Joseph Ratzinger faces, isn't it? The newly elected Pope Benedict XVI has just inherited the world's greatest pulpit, but, on his home continent at least, there's hardly anyone in the pews to listen.

He can preach to the choir, of course: After nearly three centuries of enlightened disdain for religion, Europe is about as dechristianized as it's likely to get; everyone who's going to leave the Church already has, and still there are millions of believers scattered across the continent—to say nothing of the billion or so who don't happen to live a train ride away from Rome. In all likelihood, the European Union and the national governments will soon cave in and grant their Muslim immigrants the religious exemptions those governments have consistently

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Joseph Bottum is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard *and editor of* First Things.

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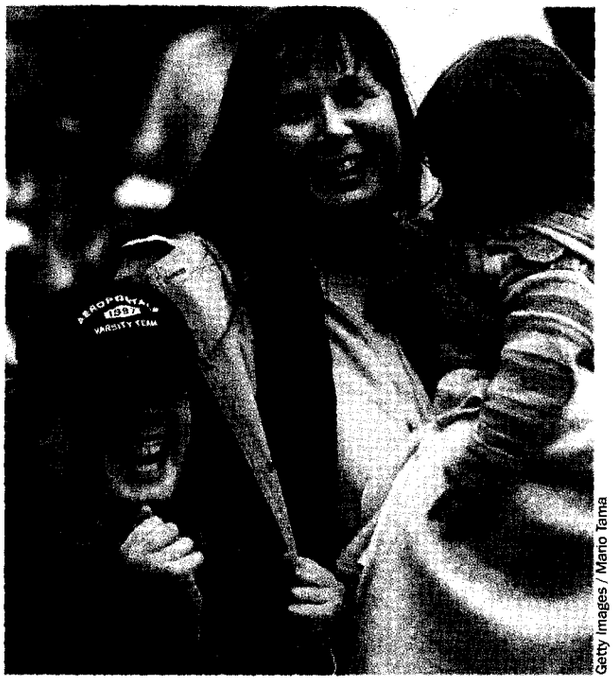
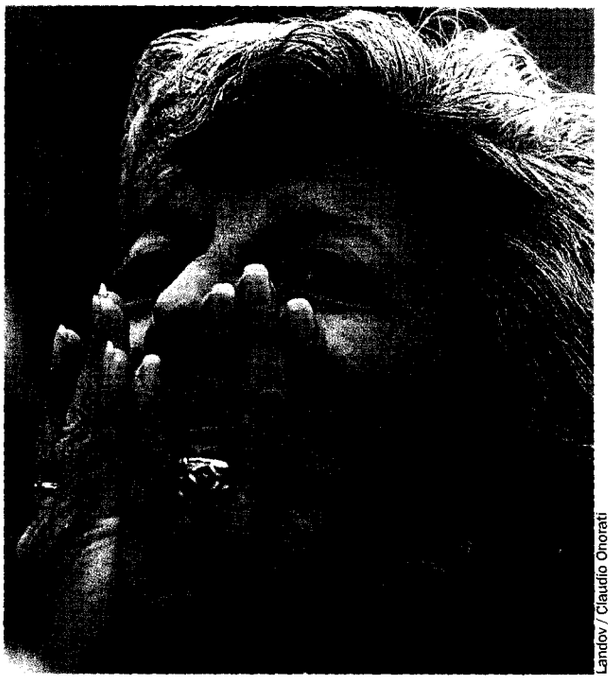

Getty Images / Mario Tama


Landov / Claudio Onorati

refused to grant Catholics. And that will prove what the Vatican claimed all the way back in its struggles with the French Revolution: The European form of Enlightenment secularism and *laïcité* was never some purely philosophical stand on the necessary political separation of church and state; it always began and ended with anti-Catholicism.

It still does. As the refusal to mention Christianity in the historical preface to the new constitution of the European Union proves, Catholics in Western Europe are going to have to look out for themselves. They're only a remnant, but they're still a large one, and to them Benedict XVI can continue carrying the message of the Church —even though they live on a continent where the Italian conservative Rocco Buttiglione was not allowed to become a European commissioner because, it was argued, his Catholicism was incompatible with the office, and where influential French figures protested loudly when France's president dared to attend John Paul II's funeral.

And yet, the moral and intellectual force of the papacy derives from the fact that no one ever thought of Catholicism as merely preaching to the choir. People are fascinated by it, French secularists are *anti-* it, every newspaper in the world carried headline after headline these last three weeks about it—all precisely because, for good or for ill, the Catholic Church has never admitted that it is a sect. It always insists that it is a *universal* church—*catholic*, as Catholics like to say—and it claims to speak with a force that doesn't come just from the political power of its believers. It is a way of thinking and being: a reasoned moral argument about how human life might best be lived.

And so, to follow the great act of John Paul II, the Catholic Church elected a 78-year-old German who is, by training and temperament, an *arguer*—a highly intellectual theologian, a man of sweet reason, a lifelong believer in the power of thought to persuade by applying universal truths to particular circumstances.

His difficulty is this: How can you argue in favor of argument with a people who childishly begin by arguing against the possibility of any universal truth? Relativism has come to seem "the only attitude acceptable to today's standards," Ratzinger told his fellow cardinals at the beginning of the conclave that elected him. "We are moving toward a dictatorship of relativism which does not recognize anything as for certain and which has as its highest goal one's own ego and one's own desires"—but "being an adult means having a faith which does not follow the waves of today's fashions or the latest novelties."

This is a theme Ratzinger has taken up before. In his 2003 collection of essays, *Truth and Tolerance*, for instance, he describes John Paul II's 1998 encyclical on Christian philosophy, *Fides et Ratio*, as concerned most of all with restoring the place of truth "in a world characterized by relativism." He insists that Jesus Christ—the *Logos*, the Word made flesh—"assures us of the rationality of the world, the rationality of our being, the divine character of reason, and the reasonable character of God, even though God's rationality surpasses ours immeasurably and appears to us as darkness." Thus "Europe must defend

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Getty Images / Marco Di Lauro

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Faces in the crowd: Pilgrims in St. Peter's Square greet the new pope.

reason"—for "Rationality has been the postulate and the condition of Christianity and will remain a European legacy."

It's a stern task, when you have to convince people that there is such a thing as reason before you can argue with them about what reason says. Still, if the Western Europeans won't join the argument now, when will they? Watching all those historically Catholic places—Italy, France, Spain, Ratzinger's own Bavaria—slipping into intellectual and moral senescence, Ratzinger has tried to warn of the "leaden loneliness and inner boredom of a world emptied of God."

Given the increasing percentage of cardinals from Africa and the Americas, Benedict XVI is probably Europe's last pope for a good, long while. He may even be Europe's last chance.

As he began, so Benedict XVI apparently plans to continue. A day after the white smoke and the bells from St. Peter's declared his election, officials in the Roman curia announced that the new pope's first open press conference would take place on Saturday, April 23. Say those words slowly, for they mark a curious moment, when the heir of St. Peter—the *pontifex maximus*, the rock upon which the Church is built, the holder of the keys, the *ex cathedra* speaker of infallible truths, the more-than-royal ruler of Vatican City who can bind on earth and in heaven—invites journalists to come over and have a little argument with him.

We can forget how much John Paul II demystified the papacy. He joined John Paul I in refusing coronation with the triple crown, the assertion of absolute worldly power that had graced his predecessors. He joked with the Italian crowd in the first moments of his pontificate. He skied, and hiked, and laughed, and had thousands of people to dinner over the 27 years of his pontificate. Millions of others felt as though they knew him, just from being in the huge crowds he gathered wherever he went. Two or three days after his election, a journalist violated every rule of the Holy See's etiquette by shouting out at a papal audience, "Are you going to Poland?" Leo XIII would have had the Swiss Guard take the man down for a session in the Holy Office's penitential dungeons. Pius XII would have sat silent and stared—through those harsh, wire-rim glasses he wore—for as long as it took to make even a reporter blush. But John Paul gave instead his trademark, tilt-headed smile and said, "Wait and see, wait and see." It was said to be the first unscripted answer a pope had ever made to a journalist.

But even while he was demystifying the papacy, he was busy remystifying it, too, by the force of his own charisma. Within weeks of becoming pope, he had set out on the John Paul II grand tour, and he quickly became the most visible human being on earth. Life with John Paul II was always high drama—geopolitically, ecclesiastically, and personally. However much he swept aside papal decorum, to see him was to know that you were in the presence of the *pope*.

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When Benedict XVI, addressing the Roman crowd in the first moments after his election on April 19, called himself "a humble laborer in the vineyard of the Lord," he was speaking in the tropes of self-deprecation and humility required by his Christian faith. But he was also speaking the truth: He is a humble man—shy, even, in a good-natured, monkish way, as you could see in his wide eyes as he stood in white on the papal balcony—and everyone who has ever met him speaks of his courtesy and patience. On his cardinal's coat of arms he set a bear with a pack on its back, a reference to the legend of St. Korbinian. While traveling from Germany to Italy, the saint had his pack horse killed by a bear—and so he ordered the bear to carry his luggage instead. "Isn't Korbinian's bear, compelled against his will to carry the saint's pack, a picture of my own life?" Ratzinger wrote at the time. And this is how Benedict XVI still sees himself: merely a pack animal, a German bear ordered by a saint named John Paul II to carry a burden to Rome.

Not that you'd know it from the names he's been called—"the *panzer* cardinal," "the pope's hitman," "the modern Torquemada"—since John Paul appointed him in 1981 to head the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the office in Rome that evaluates the orthodoxy of new Catholic writings and practices. "Hard-line" seems to have become the word of choice since his election as pope. A "hard-line doctrinal watchdog," the *Los Angeles Times* called him. "The church's leading hard-liner," the Associated Press added. On and on, commentator after commentator struggled for just the right word to make the point: "hard-line Catholics got their man," for instance, or "hard-liner Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger." And, of course, "a hard-line guardian," "a seasoned and hard-line German theologian," "hard-line positions," "hard-line stances"—and I gave up counting after I reached more than 400 news stories using the word to describe him in the weeks since John Paul II died.

"Joseph Ratzinger is afraid," the dissident theologian Hans Küng thundered back in 1985. "And just like Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor, he fears nothing more than freedom." When Cardinal Ratzinger came to New York in January 1988 to deliver a mild talk on biblical scholarship to a group of Protestant and Catholic theologians, his talk was interrupted while the police hauled away hecklers shouting "Stop the Inquisition!" and "No violence against gays!" That same year, Matthew Fox, a New Age theologian from San Francisco, responded to his censure from Ratzinger's office by calling the Vatican "a fascist state" and taking out a full-page ad in national newspapers to shout loudly, "I Have Been Silenced!" Meanwhile, the sexual liberationist Charles E. Curran sued Washington, D.C.'s Catholic University after a ruling from Ratzinger caused the school to rescind his license to teach official Catholic theology.

In point of fact, as a few Vaticanologists have noted, Ratzinger's tenure at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was one of the most lenient ever. Such figures as Küng, Fox, and Curran were not barred from teaching theology—merely told they couldn't call their ideas the doctrine of the Church. An Asian theologian who denied the divinity of Jesus and the virginity of Mary was the only theologian actually excommunicated for his theology—and he was reinstated after he recanted. For all the complaints from the left, the sole major excommunication for theological error while Ratzinger worked for John Paul II was of the followers of Bishop Marcel Lefebvre: extreme traditionalists who reject the reforms of Vatican II.

But there was something inevitable about the attacks on Ratzinger. His students all remain in awe of his theological and biblical learning, and it was as a theological adviser to the archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Frings, at Vatican II that he first came to wide notice, helping draft *Lumen Gentium* (Latin for "light of the nations"), the document that modernized the structure of the Church. But he writes in his 1997 memoir that he was deeply saddened by the loss of his scholarly theological career when, in reward, Paul VI appointed him archbishop of Munich in 1977. And then his friend John Paul II—they had become close at the conclave that elected John Paul I—persuaded him to become, in essence, the orthodoxy cop: leading the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, as it has been known since Vatican II, or the Holy Office of the Inquisition, to give it its older, perhaps more familiar name.

It was a thankless job for anyone as personally mild as Cardinal Ratzinger, however intellectually stern he is. Ratzinger's particular reputation as a hard-liner, however, may have been predetermined merely by the popularity and high drama of John Paul II. The Polish pope certainly came in for his share of attacks, usually from disaffected Catholics. But most of the media and even many of the unhappy Catholics wanted somehow to think of John Paul II as *their* pope, to share in the glow of his charisma and see themselves as participating in the story he was acting out on the world stage. And so it was the gentle Ratzinger who had to become, in their eyes, "the *panzer* cardinal" and "the modern Torquemada."

His image will recover. In his first message as pope, delivered in his perfect scholar's Latin to the cardinals in the Sistine Chapel the morning after his election, Ratzinger spoke of the Catholic liturgy: "I ask everyone to intensify in coming months love and devotion to the Eucharistic Jesus and to express in a courageous and

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clear way the real presence of the Lord, above all through the solemnity and the correctness of the celebrations."

But the sternness with which Benedict XVI demanded solemnity and correctness derives from the winsome joy in the Mass he speaks of in his memoirs: "Each new stage in my approach to the liturgy was a great event, each new edition of the missal a precious treasure," he wrote of his childhood. "Gradually penetrating the mysterious world of the liturgy which was celebrated at the altar in front of us was an exciting adventure. I realized with increasing clarity that I was encountering something which had been created neither by an individual, by a great mind, nor by Church officials. This mysterious tapestry of texts and actions had developed over centuries, out of the Church's faith." It is this quality that he is already revealing to the world, and it will soon make more difficult the dismissal of the man as some brutal German dictator.

Still, the papal throne John Paul II left him is a demystified one, and though charming and gentle—a man always willing to lay out one more theological argument—Benedict lacks John Paul's talent for making the papacy a personal and dramatic mystery. The scheduling of a press conference suggests the new pope will not reign so much as take every opportunity to continue the argument.

Perhaps the most curious thing about the attacks on Cardinal Ratzinger, as they now carry over to Pope Benedict XVI, is that he actually seems to stand somewhere to the left of his predecessor on the worldly issues that some might think would matter most to his non-Catholic critics in the media. John Paul II's 1991 encyclical *Centesimus Annus* might be described as "Three Cheers for Democracy, Two Cheers for Capitalism." Ratzinger's rare comments on economics over the years suggest he'd give only, perhaps, one tepid cheer for modern capitalism. He's a Social Democrat, after all, from Germany, where they always thought they were going to find a way to split the difference between communism and capitalism.

It's unlikely that he will issue many papal statements on the topic; he has already signaled that the liturgy and internal Church matters will be the focus of his papacy. Still, in all the raging from liberal commentators since his election, his mild and sentimental socialism has somehow escaped notice.

In itself, that's a revealing sign that he might be right about the condition of the world in which he finds himself pope. The economic issues that once defined the division between left and right are now invisible, at least to the liberal European and American elite who have decided to despise the new pope. In the narrowing of liberal thought, there's nothing left to rail about but sex: abortion, contraception, divorce, homosexuality, and all the rest of the tired, old "Spirit of Vatican II" issues.

After the four years of pontifical discourses in which John Paul II laid out his theology of the body, it's hard to see how anyone can imagine change in the Church's teaching on sexual morality. But the fact that these are the only issues about which the new pope's opponents can bring themselves to care—surely that's a sign that Benedict may be right about a culture "which has as its highest goal one's own ego and one's own desires."

Several thoughtful Catholic writers have suggested that the new pope, by choosing the name Benedict, is telling the Church to prepare for trouble. The original Benedict—St. Benedict, one of the patron saints of Europe—founded Western monasticism, establishing the system of convents and monasteries that would preserve Greek and Roman learning through the barbarian invasions and the coming of the dark ages, thereby helping to create what we think of as European culture. Thus, the new Pope Benedict is calling for a revival of the Benedictine movement: a smaller and purer Church that can in its isolated communities save the remnants of the old European Catholicism.

Perhaps so. But it will have to be a virtual monasticism, spread loosely across the continent. And I'm not persuaded Benedict has given up on saving Europe as a whole. His promise to fulfill John Paul II's mission and go to the World Youth Day in Germany this August suggests not. "Dear Ones, this intimate recognition for a gift of divine mercy prevails in my heart in spite of everything," he told the cardinals in the Sistine Chapel. "I consider this a grace obtained for me by my venerated predecessor, John Paul II. It seems I can feel his strong hand squeezing mine; I seem to see his smiling eyes and listen to his words, addressed to me especially at this moment: 'Do not be afraid!'"

Besides, to abandon Europe may be merely to put off the problem of evangelizing democracies. When Latin American and African democracies become stable and more prosperous, perhaps they will undergo the same slide that Europe has experienced. The Catholic Church spent most of the Middle Ages learning how to rein in the characteristic abuses of monarchies, and when the European monarchies suddenly collapsed between the 1840s and the 1940s, Catholic thinkers were caught flat-footed. But in the years since, the Vatican has used much of its time trying to figure out how to rein in the characteristic abuses of the democracies—beginning with the drift down into a boring and deadening relativism.

Now the job has fallen to Benedict XVI, who must find a way to reason, with those who no longer believe much in reason, that intellectual seriousness and moral rationality —"the postulate and the condition of Christianity"—can still guide Europe away from the new Dark Ages. ♦

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The Darfur Disaster

[illegible] personal [illegible] Khartoum

BY JONATHAN [illegible]ARL

Khartoum, Sudan

Flanked by 18th-century cannons, Sudan's presidential [illegible] palace stands impressively on the bank of the [illegible] the main entrance, elaborately decorated soldiers [illegible] toting AK-47s fitted with razor-sharp bayonets. [illegible] main hall, you walk under two enormous elephant tusks [illegible] between two vintage five-barrel machine guns aimed directly at you. Welcome to Khartoum.

Here at the palace, Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick sat down with the most powerful man in Sudan, First Vice President Ali Osman Taha. After their meeting on April 14 Taha [illegible] Zoellick on a palace tour, eager to show him the location of the [illegible]ous event ever to happen in that building: the killing and behe[illegible] of the British general Charles "Chinese" Gordon.

As the colonial governor in the 1870s, Gordon [illegible]roicall[illegible]ught to end the trade of black slaves by Sudan's Arab minor[illegible] A decade later, the British sent Gordon back to Khartoum to deal with an Islamic rebellion led by an ally of the slave traders who proclaimed himself the

The village of Um Zaifa, being razed by the Janjaweed, December 12, 2004
Photos by Brian Steidle

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Mahdi, which is Arabic for the "expected one." The Mahdi's holy warriors overwhelmed the British, slaughtering Gordon in the palace. Although the precise circumstances of Gordon's death are disputed, Taha showed Zoellick the version depicted in the classic movie *Khartoum*, with Charlton Heston and Laurence Olivier. In the movie, Gordon stood, unarmed, atop a stone staircase as one of the Mahdi's holy warriors thrust a spear into his heart. Gordon's head was paraded around Khartoum atop a stake, a gruesome symbol of the defeat of British imperialism on the Nile and a lesson to Westerners who try to control events in Sudan.

Robert Zoellick managed to get out of Sudan with his head, but Sudan poses one of the most perplexing challenges to President Bush's inaugural vow to oppose tyranny around the world. For the past two years, Sudan's western Darfur region has been the setting of an orchestrated campaign of murder and pillage. Last fall, Colin Powell called the killings in Darfur "genocide." Estimates of the number killed vary from 70,000 to over 300,000. So many villages have been torched and plundered that it seems as if everyone in Darfur has taken shelter in refugee camps. Of 2.6 million people in all of Darfur, an arid region the size of Texas, more than 2 million live in the camps. This is one of the largest humanitarian crises of modern times.

In the best-equipped camps, survivors have sufficient food and safe water, but that's about it. Most people are afraid to return to their destroyed villages. After his meetings in Khartoum, Zoellick flew to the El Fasher airport in Darfur and visited a camp of nearly 100,000 refugees called Abu Shouk. Everyone I spoke to there told a similar story of military aircraft bombing their villages from the sky and "Janjaweed" attacking on the ground. Janjaweed—which means, literally, devil on a horse—is what the villagers call the tribal militiamen.

Last year, the African Union sent a small force of monitors to Darfur. About 2,000 African Union troops are now there to watch and document the killing, but not to stop it. African Union monitors have seen the destruction firsthand and have compiled thousands of photographs and witness testimony. Their files are overflowing with evidence backing up the endless stories of villages being bombed from the air by Sudanese military aircraft and pillaged from the ground by marauders on horseback. These photos, together with thousands of pages of testimony from refugees, have been shipped off to the International Criminal Court in anticipation of future war crimes trials. Some of the most graphic photos were taken by a former U.S. Marine captain named Brian Steidle who went to work in Darfur for six months as a contractor for the African Union.

"We've got photographs that show the government of Sudan looting," says Steidle. "Show them burning, show them working side-by-side with the Janjaweed, the helicopter gunships shooting on civilian villages."

Steidle showed me his pictures. In fact, he is now showing them to anybody who wants to see them. But they are not easy to look at.

One shows a decaying human carcass fading into the sand, its skeletal hands tied over the skull, pants pulled down to the decaying feet. Here is photographic evidence of one person's final hours, tortured and left to die under the unrelenting desert sun. Steidle's aerial photos show the catastrophe on a large scale: burning villages as far as the eye can see. Look carefully at his photographs and you can see Sudanese military aircraft flying over the villages as they burn.

In a sign that at least one part of the State Department would prefer a less confrontational approach, Steidle was told to keep his pictures to himself. An official on the State Department's Sudan desk named Taiya Smith told him, Steidle says, that releasing the photos would anger the government of Sudan and make it difficult for Americans to get visas to return to the region. Not everybody in Foggy Bottom sees it that way: Condoleezza Rice later thanked Steidle for drawing attention to the issue.

The State Department says the attacks on villages have slowed over the past few months. There's good reason for that. Virtually all the villages have been destroyed. "I think they're nearing completion of their mission," says Steidle. "There's nothing left for them to attack."

Zoellick says the Darfur problem has "layers and layers of complexity." In a sense, he's right. There are about 80 tribes in the region, many with blood rivalries going back centuries. This is hardly the first time that tribal conflicts have flared up, villages have burned, and people have been killed. But the current crisis is dramatically different.

Unlike the ancient tribal conflicts, this disaster started almost yesterday. The roots of the mass killings can be traced to February 2003, when a group of antigovernment rebels launched a series of brazen attacks on government property. Armed with Kalashnikovs and Toyota pickup trucks with mounted machine guns in the back, they scored their biggest hit in April 2003 with an attack on the airport outside the town of El Fasher, destroying several Sudanese military aircraft. The ragtag group of rebels had the Sudanese government worried about large-scale insurrection. The government decided to hit back. The result is the devastation seen today throughout the region.

The rebels come primarily from Darfur's non-Arab tribes, farmers who live in small villages throughout the

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Jonathan Karl is senior foreign affairs correspondent for ABC News.

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Janjaweed families divide the loot they took from the village of Um Zaifa, December 13, 2004.

region; the government responded with a call to arms to the Arab tribes, nomads who survive by herding camels and cattle. Unlike Sudan's long-running civil war between Christians and Muslims, this conflict is not religious. Virtually everybody in Darfur, Arab and non-Arab, is Muslim. The nomads and farmers have clashed before, just as the grazers and farmers in the American west clashed over access to land and water, but this crisis differs in that the government has weighed in heavily on the side of the nomads.

Diplomatically, the United States is hardly even on speaking terms with Sudan. The embassy in Khartoum is open, but barely. There hasn't been a U.S. ambassador to Sudan since 1996, and today only a half-dozen Americans work at the embassy. Last July, Colin Powell became only the second secretary of state ever to visit the country. The first was Cyrus Vance, who met with officials during a refueling stop at the Khartoum airport 27 years ago. Powell came armed with satellite images of the devastation in Darfur and a simple message to the government: We know what you are doing in Darfur. His trip, which also included a short stop at the Abu Shouck refugee camp, was quick and high on symbolism.

Zoellick came to the presidential palace in Khartoum, just as Colin Powell did last summer, to press the government to stop the killing in Darfur. But this was no drive-by visit. He spent two full days in Sudan, meeting with virtually everybody who has a stake in the issue: tribal leaders, refugees, the governor (or "wali") of Darfur, the African Union commander, relief workers, and, of course, top officials like Vice President Taha. Everywhere Zoellick took copious notes of potential "action items." His message: The U.S. commitment to this issue goes beyond rhetoric. Zoellick hopes to convince NATO—but, first, the Pentagon—to give the African Union forces logistical support. Beyond that, it's not clear what the United States can do.

Europe, for its part, has economic leverage. European business with Sudan has actually increased as the violence has escalated in Darfur. You can now fly Lufthansa, KLM, and British Airways to Khartoum. European companies have sunk money into developing Sudan's oil reserves. China has done the same, to an even greater degree. The United States has done the opposite, maintaining unilateral sanctions. Americans can't even use a credit card in Sudan. Unfortunately, the sanctions, along with limited diplomatic relations, leave the United States without much leverage over the government in Khartoum.

By meeting with Vice President Taha, Zoellick was taking the case to the man considered the real power in Sudan. Taha is an erstwhile protégé of Osama bin Laden's former host and mentor, Hassan al-Turabi. These days, though, he sports finely tailored Western suits. Eager to develop Sudan's oil reserves, Taha seeks international respect.

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As Zoellick and Taha sat down for a quick photo op before the meeting, Carol Giacomo of Reuters had the audacity to shout out, "Vice President Taha, the United States accuses your government of genocide. Will you stop the violence in Darfur?"

After an uncomfortable pause, he answered, "We are working diligently to stop the violence."

The problem, I would soon learn, is that it is hard to get a government to stop doing something it denies is even happening.

As Zoellick met with Vice President Taha, I asked a Sudanese newspaper editor to help me get an interview with the man in charge of the security forces, Interior Minister Abdul Rahim Muhammad Hussein, who is blamed for much of the violence in Darfur. I figured this would be a long-shot. Hussein is rumored to be on a secret list of 51 potential war criminals the U.N. has forwarded to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for possible indictments. Would he really agree to talk to an American reporter? To my surprise, I got a call back within minutes. "Go right away to the Interior Ministry," I was told. "He will do the interview now."

Dressed in military uniform, the gregarious interior minister wanted to make one thing clear: He will not let any of his men appear before the International Criminal Court in The Hague. The U.N. Security Council voted on March 31 to refer the Darfur war crimes issue to the ICC. Hussein told me, in English, that anybody accused of crimes in Sudan must be tried in Sudan by Sudanese judges.

"What will you do if you are indicted by the ICC?" I asked.

"I will ask Rumsfeld to go with me because he has killed hundreds of people in Iraq," he said, laughing. "Why [should] I go alone? We should go together."

The interior minister talks like a clever lawyer. He knows the one thing the United States and Sudan agree on is the International Criminal Court, which neither country recognizes.

Hussein eagerly pointed to a recent U.N. inquiry report on Darfur as evidence his government is not guilty of genocide. And he's right. The report clears the government of genocide in unmistakable terms, stating simply, "The government of Sudan has not pursued a policy of genocide." Case closed.

Not so fast. The comprehensive 176-page U.N. report offers a devastating indictment of the government, tying it directly to the Janjaweed that have inflicted so much destruction on Darfur. "The government of the Sudan and the Janjaweed are responsible for serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law," the report says. "These acts were conducted on a widespread and systematic basis, and therefore may amount to crimes against humanity." So why not genocide? Because "genocide" is a legal term that requires evidence that the government intentionally pursued policies designed to eliminate all or part of an ethnic group. The U.N. report concluded that the government isn't trying to wipe non-Arab Africans off the face of the earth. But the government is ruthlessly engaging in "counterinsurgency warfare." The government wants to crush the rebels, and if that means killing thousands of civilians in the process, so be it.

Colin Powell put the United States on record calling the Darfur killings genocide last September. Until that point, the Europeans had resisted any significant punitive action against the government of Sudan. Powell's pronouncement elevated the issue and made it impossible for the rest of the world to ignore. Within a week, the U.N., with Europe's support, launched the investigation into the atrocities committed in Darfur.

But there is a danger in putting too much emphasis on a word. The killings in Darfur are horrible, indiscriminate crimes, whether or not they fit the legal definition of genocide. In fact, Human Rights Watch, which has done more than any other human rights group to sound the alarm about Darfur, has not used the term genocide to describe what is happening there. The United States stands virtually alone in making that statement.

The interior minister would like to deny that anything illegal has happened in Darfur. When I ask him about all the burning villages, he offers a creative explanation.

"If you notice the way the houses are built," he tells me. "They are built from grass. One bullet from a Kalashnikov can burn a whole village."

"Do you acknowledge the Sudanese military has killed innocent people in Darfur?" I ask.

"I don't think."

"None?"

"You mean, did they intend to kill innocent people?"

"Yes."

"No. Definitely no," the interior minister tells me. "But if you said during the conflict that some innocent people died, between the two groups fighting, that may happen, definitely. Because any war, whatever it is—if it is done by the Americans or done by the Sudanese—civilian people die. War is war."

What about the well-documented reports of Sudanese military helping the Janjaweed to destroy villages?

"Never. It never happened. Never happened," Hussein says.

"There are photographs," I say, "of people in Sudanese army uniforms at these villages as they are being destroyed?"

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"Yes," he replies, "and there are photographs of American army doing bad things in prisons."

Brian Steidle, in Darfur

I had one more interview I wanted to get before leaving Khartoum. Sheikh Musa Hilal has been named by the United States and human rights groups as the most ruthless of the Janjaweed leaders and the prime candidate for a war crimes indictment. Like his father and his grandfather, Hilal is the chief of a tribe of Arab camel-herding nomads. His family has been considered desert royalty in Sudan for decades, maybe even centuries. He may also be the most media savvy camel herder in the world. Over the past year, he's done interviews with BBC, the *New York Times*, and other Western media outlets.

The Sudanese newspaper editor who helped me get in to see the interior minister said he would try to help me with Hilal too. But Hilal was supposedly no longer talking to the media. He was keeping his head down, I had heard, because of the prospect of war crimes trials for Darfur. One reporter told me that the government had ordered Hilal to stop talking to the media.

I was just about to give up when another Sudanese journalist (these folks are amazingly generous with their sources) gave me Musa Hilal's cell phone number. "Just leave me out of it," he told me. There's something odd about calling a suspected war criminal on his cell phone, but, sure enough, he answered. I explained who I was and asked if I could meet with him. In perfect English, he responded, "Musa Hilal doesn't speak English" and hung up.

Eventually, with the help of an interpreter, Hilal agreed to meet with me. I found him at a formal dinner of tribal leaders in Khartoum. Dressed in white tribal garb, Hilal is in his 40s and bears a striking resemblance to a younger Muammar Qaddafi. Hilal said the reports of genocide in Darfur are a "media fabrication" and repeatedly said, "I am not a war criminal." But amidst the denials, Hilal subtly offered a more mundane defense: He was following orders.

"When the rebels of Darfur knocked down the planes at El Fasher airport," Hilal explained, "the government asked everybody to help it defeat the rebels." He added: "I have my own territory and when I was asked by the government, I tried to keep my territory quiet and peaceful." Keeping it quiet and peaceful apparently meant destroying the rebels and all the villages they come from.

There are "layers and layers of complexity" here after all. Hilal's dinner was with 50 or so leaders of the Fur, one of the largest non-Arab tribes in the region (this is the tribe the region is named for). These are leaders of the people Hilal stands accused of terrorizing. The "chief of the chiefs" of the Fur tribe sat next to Hilal as I interviewed him. The chief is an elderly and desperate man. He wants reconciliation with Hilal because he wants his people out of the camps, where they are essentially wards of international relief agencies, and back to their villages. He doesn't have much faith in the power of the international community to get his villages back, so he is going directly to his enemy to ask for peace.

The United States has a different approach to Musa Hilal. Last July, Powell presented the Sudanese government with the names of seven people who should be arrested for war crimes. Hilal was at the top of the list. That's not going to happen. The place where I interviewed Hilal was a kind of social club for police officers. Far from fearing arrest, the man called a war criminal by the United States seemed to have the run of the place. ♦

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Sects and the City

The new urbanists have forgotten thousands of years of history.

By Joel Kotkin

When Fargo, North Dakota, businessman Howard Dahl boards a plane for the East Coast or flies to Europe and beyond, he is often struck by the views of the people he encounters, especially their preconceptions about his part of the country. "There's a lot of condescension. You'd think no one here ever read a book," Dahl says, "or ever had a thought about anything. They think we're religious fanatics."

To Dahl, a successful international exporter of agricultural technology, this contempt is sometimes hard to understand. A devout Christian who spent three years at a Lutheran seminary, he comes from an increasingly sophisticated urban community of nearly 200,000—where religion's role in daily life, public and private, is accepted almost without question.

"In Fargo, businessmen easily see themselves as people of faith," he notes. "Religion plays a huge role, but, because of our Nordic heritage, it is very quiet. It sets people's ethics and how they work and relate with each other."

Oddly enough, places like Fargo, a booming high-tech city on the Great Plains, are more in sync with ancient urban tradition than are supposed paragons of American city life like New York, Boston, and San Francisco, much less the classical centers of Rome, London, and Paris. In these cities, for the most part, religion—with the notable exception of Islam—is on the decline, as churches and religious schools close and attendance dwindles often to minuscule levels.

This retreat from religion is one of the least understood and discussed aspects of the relative decline of the great cities of the West. To be sure, there are many other, more tangible causes—the rise of the Internet, the generations-long flight of the middle class to the suburbs, fear of terrorism. But the decline of religious community may reflect a deeper malaise that could weaken the very spirit of urban culture.

Churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques provide critical ballast for cities. In an often impersonal and challenging environment they offer a place of refuge and solace, a means of gradual assimilation for the newly arrived, and, perhaps most important, an alternative setting for the inculcation of values in the new generation.

Yet it is clear that religion is losing its hold on American cities. This can be seen in New York, where the Catholic archbishop stood as a powerful force for well over a century. Today he is an increasingly marginal player. By the time Rudy Giuliani became mayor of New York, notes historian Fred Siegel, author of a forthcoming biography of the former mayor, "the gay community was more important than the Catholic archbishop."

Much the same can be said of most big American cities. Many have either chosen to bar, or been forced by courts to bar, nativity scenes from their parks and other public land. "Merry Christmas" is now routinely replaced with the generic "Happy Holidays" on anything remotely public at the end of the year. Several California schools have banned the singing even of secular Christmas songs like "Jingle Bells," and others have removed colored lights as potentially offensive.

Perhaps the most perfectly emblematic instance of the displacement of religion from urban culture occurred in Los Angeles in late 2004. The mere threat of a lawsuit by the local chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union persuaded the County Board of Supervisors to remove a small cross from the county seal. The cross, which stood for the role of the church and the Spanish missions in the settlement of California, was a detail, not the central motif of the seal, and its removal prompted widespread public protest and a petition drive to restore it. On the redesigned seal, there is a cross-free mission building that looks rather like a Taco Bell.

The ease with which the supervisors wiped out the cross (though they couldn't quite excise the angels from

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Joel Kotkin is an Irvine senior fellow at the New America Foundation and the author of The City: A Global History, *just released by Modern Library.*

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the county's name) reflects the degree to which modern cities, not only in America but throughout the advanced industrial world, have cut themselves off from their religious roots. Even contemporary accounts of urban history —including such notable works as Sir Peter Hall's *Cities in Civilization*—are mostly deaf to the role of religion in cities. Religion is not exactly a hot topic among new urbanists, who seem to think that good design, coupled with good intentions, is a substitute for a grounded sense of moral order.

Instead, the contemporary urban environment emphasizes faddishness, style, and the celebration of the individual over the family or the community. The postmodern perspective on cities, dominant in much of the academy, even more adamantly dismisses shared moral values as mere detritus of what one German academic labeled "the Christian-bourgeois microcosmos."

Indeed, in this secular era, it is difficult to recapture the centrality of religion during most of urban history. Religious structures—temples, cathedrals, mosques, and pyramids—dominated the landscape of great cities and the imagination of their occupants. These sacred buildings made visible cities' connections to divine forces controlling the world.

Today cities are dominated instead by towering commercial buildings and evocative cultural and governmental structures. Such sights can inspire a sense of civic pride or awe. "A striking landscape," historian Kevin Lynch once suggested, "is the skeleton" in which city dwellers construct their "socially important myths."

Yet memorable architecture and urban "myths" lack a critical component of urban life that religion provides: It is a source of moral order and spiritual sustenance. The earliest city dwellers confronted problems vastly different from those faced in prehistoric nomadic communities and agricultural villages. Urbanites had to learn how to co-exist and interact with strangers from outside their clan or tribe. This required them to develop new ways to codify behavior and determine what would be commonly acceptable in family life, commerce, and social discourse. In doing so, they drew on their religious heritage—not only in the West but virtually everywhere. The earliest cities in India, China, and Mesoamerica all displayed similar attachment to religious principles, suggesting, as the American historian T.R. Fehrenbach notes, the existence of a common sensibility among early city-builders in all parts of the world.

Perhaps the most enduring expression of that urban tradition today lies in the Muslim world. Mohammed himself was an urbanite, and his legislation was aimed in large part at overcoming the strife and moral confusion of clan-based society in 7th-century Arabia. The mosque, suggests Iranian-born urbanist Ali Modarres, served not only as a center of worship, but also as a community center where city problems were addressed. Among the greatest contributions of Islam, he adds, were rules for dealing with religious minorities, including Jews and Christians, that for centuries were for the most part far more favorable than those in the Christian West.

The decline of religion in Western cities represents a break with history. Even before the advent of Christianity, religious faith and culture dominated classical cities—from the Greek polis to Alexandria and Rome—whose central buildings were often temples to the gods. Rome's historic core, noted Livy, was "impregnated by religion. . . . The Gods inhabit it." Jewish Jerusalem was dominated by its own temple, this one dedicated to the one God of Israel.

Many early Christians, including Augustine of Hippo, rejected the classical identification with the polis, which they saw as expressing a detested and oppressive pagan culture. Augustine portrayed Rome as the "earthly city," or *civitas terrena*, that "glories in itself" and whose wickedness deserved punishment. Rather than propose a program to reform the dying metropolis, Augustine urged Romans to seek entrance into another kind of metropolis, the "City of God," or *civitas dei*, where "there is no human wisdom, but only godliness."

Yet the church, headquartered in the ruins of post-classical Rome, ultimately nurtured the rebirth of the city. In many decaying towns, diocesan structures served as the basis of urban boundaries and privileges; the bishops, whether in Paris, Rome, or elsewhere in Italy, were usually the only recognized authority. And even as cities grew and overcame their dependence on ecclesiastical authorities, Church spires dominated their skylines through the Renaissance. As Europeans stepped out to conquer much of the New World, missionaries often placed the main cathedral precisely where the native Americans had earlier sited their great religious centers.

The oldest American cities, notes urban historian Witold Rybczynski, including those with a religious foundation such as Boston and Philadelphia, did not develop primarily around great cathedrals and churches. And cities like Chicago, New York, and San Francisco evolved with commerce, not religion, driving their urban form.

Yet everywhere churches and churchmen played critical roles in the growth of the American metropolis. They were especially important in helping assimilate and educate the growing numbers of immigrants who swarmed into the new country. In addition, religion, par-

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ticularly Protestant theology, underpinned the reformist impulse in Great Britain, the United States, Germany, and elsewhere that surfaced in the later decades of the 19th century.

Chicago's Jane Addams, for example, struggled with formal religious belief, but viewed the life of Christ as her model of behavior and an inspiration for her work in dealing with problems of the urban poor. Many political reformers and progressive builders of modern sewers, transit systems, and parks, like the abolitionists before them, were similarly motivated by their religious faith. "One great purpose" of New York's Central Park, noted Frederick Law Olmsted, was "to supply to the hundreds of thousands of tired workers . . . a specimen of God's handiwork."

Today, the decline of religion in cities around the world, particularly in the West, can be traced to the moral and economic crises that followed the First World War. The rise of radical socialism, bohemian social mores, and an admixture of cynicism and materialism undermined the traditional role of religion in cities far and wide.

Old seal

In the rapidly urbanizing Soviet Union, religion was deliberately excised, root and branch, at the dictate of Communist ideology, irrespective of Russian tradition. Nazi Germany allowed most non-Jewish religions to survive, but promoted an amalgam of pagan mythology and scientific amorality. Mussolini's Italy maintained cordial relations with the Vatican, but embraced and elevated pagan Roman values.

American cities rejected these extremes, but nevertheless have drifted increasingly toward secularism, particularly the intellectual classes. In the years after the Second World War, historian Siegel observes, the grassroots also dried up, as "the religious middle class" fled to the suburbs. This shift in American cities pales in comparison with what has happened in the cities of east Asia and Europe, where faith has been reduced almost to a historic artifact. After nearly 3,000 years of religious identity, the bonds between cities and faith have been almost totally severed.

This is not surprising, given the state of popular opinion in Europe. Notes professor Phil Zuckerman of Pitzer College, rates of agnosticism or atheism in Scandinavia, the Czech Republic, and France reach upwards of 50 percent. Accordingly, the final text of the pending European constitution mentions neither Christianity nor God. In Japan, with its very different religious background, atheism reaches a staggering 65 percent. In comparison, just under 10 percent of Americans identify themselves as atheists.

To Zuckerman, the Europeans' rejection of religion reflects the continent's high level of social development, low crime rate, and welfare-state protections, which have undermined the traditional need for religious institutions. Conversely, he points out, religion flourishes in beleaguered and insecure environments present in Third World cities. He also attributes the relative religiosity of Americans to the higher levels of uncertainty and individual risk they live with. "The United States, compared to Europe, does not enjoy all the benefits of modern civilization," says Zuckerman, who is finishing a book on secularism in Northern Europe. "We have more crime, more to worry about. In contrast these other societies have their act together."

Yet despite his own self-described "anti-religion" orientation, even Zuckerman sees some dangers in accelerating secularism. Perhaps the most obvious is the plunge in European birth and marriage rates, which he connects with the decline in religious interest. "Religion seems to be critical to people's decision to raise children," he notes. "People in these advanced industrial societies see children more and more as a liability. Some realize that this life is better without children. And you don't even need to get married since there is no legal advantage to doing so."

This failure to reproduce, Zuckerman notes with alarm, contrasts sharply with the high birthrates of the rising Muslim minorities within Europe. These already

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make up at least a quarter of the residents of Rotterdam, Marseilles, and Malmö, and 15 percent of the residents of Brussels, the Euro-capital. Demographic trends suggest that in the next few decades some European cities will acquire Muslim majorities.

Zuckerman fears that his secular European idyll will be destroyed by a rising tide of Muslim "fundamentalists." In a half century, much of Europe could be under the dominance of those whose faith and commitment to the sanctity of the family more than make up for their disadvantages in education and training.

The threat to America's cities may not be so dire, but it is still serious. As Siegel's "religious middle class" continues to opt for the suburbs, some cities, such as Detroit, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh, see their once proud churches and synagogues left abandoned alongside other remnants of the proud industrial past. Even the black church, that bulwark of the African-American urban middle class, has begun to head out to the suburban periphery.

New seal

The situation in some of the more favored cities—Denver, Manhattan, Boston, Washington, D.C., Portland, Seattle, San Francisco—is somewhat different. With relatively few children, these cities tend to have among the lowest rates of religious affiliation, but attract sufficient numbers of the nomadic rich, gay, and single to flourish as urban playgrounds—and as homes for the working poor who serve them, along with a sizable underclass.

Native son and California historian Kevin Starr describes contemporary San Francisco as both "a theme park for restaurants" and "a cross between Carmel and Calcutta." Fewer than 50,000 people attend mass in a city of over 700,000. In Manhattan, one quarter of all Catholic churches fall short of the diocese's basic benchmarks for vitality. The borough has a quarter of all New York City's Catholic churches but barely 17 percent of its weekend Mass-goers.

In the secular cities, real estate is too valuable for churches to be left standing derelict. Instead, some are being converted into stores, restaurants, condos, or even nightclubs. Churches are a favored venue for carpet stores in Scandinavia, reports Zuckerman, a trend some hip city developers might want to note. Others have been converted into concert halls, museums, or art galleries, appropriate symbols of an urban culture that worships at the altar of the arts and adult entertainment.

Such baubles may be attractive additions to the urban scene, but they are no substitute for living religious institutions. In smaller cities, like Fargo, where religion is still vital, people are connected by what businessman Howard Dahl calls "the secret truth that they all share." And they act on it. Either out of personal religious commitment or as members of churches or other religious organizations, they contribute thousands of volunteer hours to the good of the community. In Fargo, they are unpaid teachers providing moral instruction for local youths; and they are retired people, housewives, and school children aiding in the integration into the community of refugees from Africa, Vietnam, and Bosnia, to give just two examples.

In bigger cities, churches of various persuasions—including the growing and increasingly heterogeneous evangelical movement—still supply hope for the improvement of neighborhoods through community economic development corporations. They also provide some relief from the generally awful educational culture of bigger cities, in the form of religious schools that offer not only better instruction but also coherent moral guidance to a generation of urban youth too often growing up in an ethically confused and relentlessly adult environment.

Without the force of religion, as a driver of self-improvement and moral order, cities in America, Europe, and elsewhere cannot flourish. These places may own the name and inhabit the space of the great cities of the past, but without faith and family, they cannot be the vital centers of civilization that cities have been for the last five millennia. ♦

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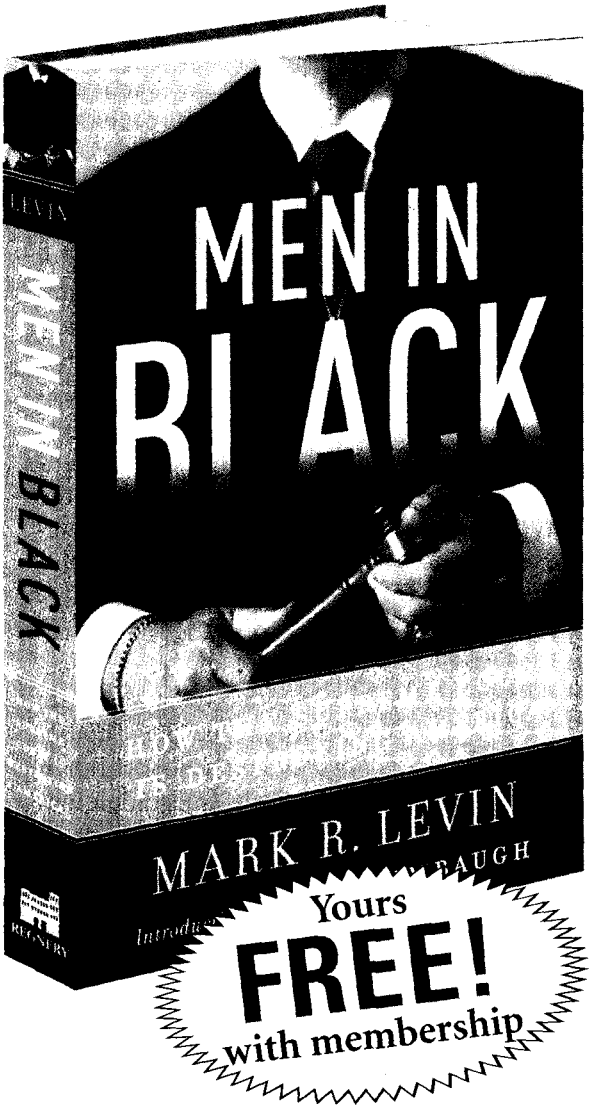
They've done more harm to America than Dan Rather, Barbra Streisand, Martin Sheen, John Kerry and both Clintons combined...



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Bettmann / CORBIS

Confederate reunion in Richmond, 1922

Run It Down the Flagpole

The battle flag that's still embattled

By Edwin M. Yoder Jr.

This book is dedicated to a late friend of the author's "who could make us laugh at anything—even southern history." His was a remarkable gift, for southern history has for the most part been no laughing matter, and as its greatest historian, C. Vann Woodward, argued in his imperishable essays, far more tragic than amusing. The South has known all too familiarly the un-American travails of poverty, defeat, and, in the struggle over slavery and race, intractable evil.

But Woodward himself could find amusement in that tragic history on occasion. During the McCarthyist inquisition of the 1950s, he was once asked to certify that neither he nor his relatives had ever advocated the violent overthrow of the government of the United States. He was obliged to note that some of his ancestors had fought for the Confederacy and had contemplated exactly such mischief. Wit can defuse passionate differences. But the recent war over the Confederate battle flag (not, *please*, the Stars and Bars, a flag of a different origin and design) has been wholly without the leavening of humor.

The Confederate Battle Flag
America's Most Embattled Emblem
by John M. Coski
Harvard University Press / Belknap,
448 pp., $29.95

John Coski, library director of the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, has given us the first documented consideration of the dispute over the appropriate use of what he calls "the second American flag," and he begins by dispelling a number of historical misconceptions about its origins and identity. It is not true, for instance, that we owe its negative symbolism to the Ku Klux Klan. In fact, Coski insists, the Kluxers made greater display of the Stars and Stripes, at least down into the KKK revival of the 1920s, when its ragtag and bobtail knights first seized on the Rebel banner as an emblem of racial and religious bigotry.

All along, such guardians as the

Edwin M. Yoder Jr., a former editor and columnist in Washington, taught journalism and the humanities at Washington and Lee University.

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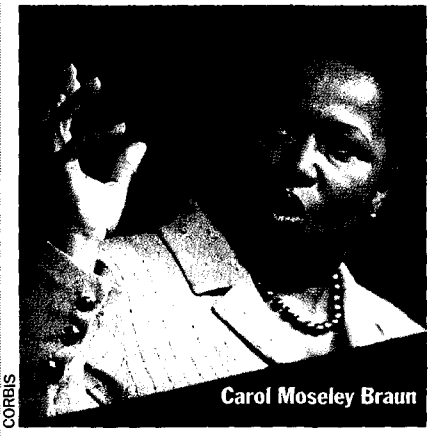
United Daughters of the Confederacy and Sons of Confederate Veterans deplored this abuse. In 1948, when the hustings were loud with revivified Confederate rhetoric, and Dixiecrat rallies tended to be festooned with battle flags, the UDC pointedly condemned the flag's use in "any political movement."

Whence, then, the angry crosscurrents that swirl about the flag today? Coski finds the origins in the apolitical "flag fad" of the 1950s, when college youth heedlessly turned it into a cheerleading rag at football games. (It was then that Ralph McGill, the Atlanta editor, complained, memorably, that it had become "confetti in careless hands.") Still, the battle flag had not yet assumed the overtones of racist reaction that its current detractors find in it. Still less had it done so when Kappa Alpha, a fraternity founded under Marse Robert E. Lee's brief tenure as president of what is now Washington and Lee University, adopted Old South paraphernalia—including the battle flag and retro balls featuring hoop skirts and pseudo-Confederate officers' uniforms. But the KAs were (mostly) gentlemen, and intended no insult in their frolics. They soon became no less wary of the abuse of the flag than the UDC. But by then, as Coski puts it, "the genie was out of the bottle and no one has been able to put it back since."

What has lately intensified the battle over the battle flag has been the struggle in four traditionalist southern states that had incorporated the battle flag in their state banners (Mississippi and Georgia), or flown it over their capitols (South Carolina and Alabama).

Mississippi had superimposed the battle flag on its state banner as far back as 1894. That gesture may have been connected with the so-called "redemption" of the state from federal control and black suffrage. But it obviously could have had nothing to do with the prolonged fight over school integration that prompted Georgia, in 1956, to make the battle flag part of its state flag as an explicit gesture of defiance. (Incidentally, Coski, whose command of southern history is impressive, erroneously applies the label "massive resistance" to anti-desegregation movements Southwide, when in fact it was a specific Virginia movement inspired by Senator Harry F. Byrd.) As for Alabama, it was that cocky bantam Gov. George C. Wallace who ran the battle flag up over the capitol building in Montgomery in 1963, as an in-your-face greeting to the visiting United States attorney general, Robert F. Kennedy.

The long and hard-fought effort to undo these idle perversions of the battle flag was complicated and greatly intensified when the NAACP got into the act with threats of economic boycott and ultimata to lower the flag and


CORBIS
Carol Moseley Braun

purge it from state banners—or else. This campaign, shrill at times, encouraged black southerners to agree—ironically—with the last-ditch defenders of the flag's in-your-face display that it was indeed a symbol of race-conscious rebelliousness. In reaction, of course, much was said about the defense of the so-called "southern heritage," selectively defined. The author's account of these battles is necessarily long and informative, perhaps a bit too long.

These latter-day battles, in any event, underscore one of Coski's principal themes—namely, that flag flaps are actually surrogate conflicts over the meaning of the history allegedly symbolized, and in particular that of the Confederacy and the Civil War. This truism would seem to require no emphasis, except that the "history" invoked by the warriors for and against the battle flag is often of a quality so inferior as to make so-called "law office history" seem real.

One comes away from *The Confederate Battle Flag* with two signal reactions. One is that the warring parties need a cram course in semiology, the better to grasp the mundane truth that responses to signs and symbols vary with the beholder. I personally would enjoy dispatching to my remedial cram school some of the more volatile warriors—notably former senators Carol Moseley Braun and Jesse Helms, who conducted an emotional quarrel on the floor of the Senate in 1993 when Senator Moseley Braun persuaded her colleagues to deny the poor old UDC a continued courtesy patent on its flag logo.

They would gradually earn the right to remove their dunce caps, along with Prince Harry of England, the great-grandson of the British king whose palace was bombed by Hitler. The prince recently larked into a costume party in Nazi storm trooper kit and seemed dazed by the negative reaction. By the way, this reviewer, the descendant on both sides of Confederate officers, implies no parallel between the battle flag and the Hitler swastika—a favorite comparison of the more insulting anti-flag spokesmen.

We hardly need to be reminded that we Americans squander much time, words, and emotion on phantom battles over vaguely defined symbolic issues, while avoiding dispassionate study of the past. I do agree with my old friend, the witty Chapel Hill sociologist John Shelton Reed, who usefully suggests that white southerners ought to learn from St. John Calhoun that his famous theory of the "concurrent majority" requires due consideration of minority views; that is, some consideration of the sense of black southerners that this flag is a symbol of servitude and oppression.

The Confederate battle flag, whatever its destiny otherwise, is an ineradicable icon of our past, and the impassioned combatants who seek either vindication or suppression may as well lower their voices and raise their historical consciousnesses. The cross of St. Andrew is here to stay. ♦

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First Impressions

Sometimes right, sometimes wrong, always revealing.

BY ROGER BATE

It may never earn the status of *Catch-22*, but the title of Malcolm Gladwell's last book added a new phrase to popular intellectual culture: "The Tipping Point" is when an idea or product suddenly becomes fashionable. With his insight and considerable research, Gladwell explained why this occurs, and the different types of people that make it happen.

In *Blink*, he may have done it again—popularizing extremely complicated, diverse, but apparently interlinked explanations of why first impressions are always important, often correct, and occasionally tragically wrong.

He sucks you straight in with an art fraud bought by the Getty Museum in Los Angeles in 1983. The experts at the Getty wanted to believe that an apparently 2,500-year-old, near-perfectly preserved *kouros* statue was genuine. They undertook scientific tests, including X-ray diffraction and mass spectrometry, and a geologist from the University of California indicated it certainly was not a contemporary fake.

Little, Brown

Malcolm Gladwell

Blink
The Power of Thinking Without Thinking
by Malcolm Gladwell
Little, Brown, 288 pp., $25.95

The *New York Times* marked the purchase with a front-page story, and everyone appeared to be happy. But two art experts, Federico Zeri and Evelyn Harrison, came to see the statue and instantly knew it was a fake. Harrison's immediate response on having the cloth over the statue removed, and being told that the Getty was buying it, was: "I'm sorry to hear that."

Over the next few months, other experts came and looked, and more tests were done, and the truth came out about the elaborate, $10 million fraud. Harrison's story is somewhat unusual, in that he was able to explain why he knew it was a fake: It looked "fresh," he said. In much of *Blink* it is interesting to see how most experts, many of whom know things intimately through years of experience, cannot explain why they know what they know. Vic Braden, a former tennis professional and successful coach, can nearly always know when a tennis player is about to serve a double fault, and is still spending time with scientists to try and figure out how he knows.

An early story discusses one of Gladwell's key concepts, the thin slice —how a little bit of knowledge goes a long way. University of Washington psychologist John Gottman analyzes couples' conversations for an hour and can tell with 95 percent certainty how strong the relationship is, and whether it will survive. He has been doing this for 15 years, with great success.

Critically, the conversation must be about something that will bring out the fundamental dynamics of the relationship. He gives as an example the problems a new dog is creating with a couple: Bill doesn't like the dog, and Sue does. What is critical, and nonexperts don't get without training, is how to analyze the way the couple interact in their discussion. Gottman has so finely captured the key ingredients—"the signature"—in relationships that his certainty of successful prediction still holds after 15 minutes' conversation.

He even says one word can sum up the majority of marital problems: contempt. Sue treats Bill's concerns about the dog with contempt, but as Gladwell wonderfully describes, it took an expert to explain how to interpret the conversation, which was "overwhelming" at first, in that it contained so much information he wasn't sure what to listen for. Addressing contempt early in a relationship may stop its otherwise almost inevitable collapse.

Gladwell discusses myriad topics: racism in car purchasing—why blacks are quoted higher prices for the same car ("the dark side of thin slicing," as he puts it); speed dating (what makes some people instantly attractive to the opposite sex); U.S. military might losing war games to technically inferior opposition that

Roger Bate is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

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do the unexpected; why ER doctors save more patients with heart attack risk by spending less time on diagnosis; and numerous fascinating examples from public relations.

The most interesting is why the Pepsi Challenge is totally meaningless. Pepsi beats Coca Cola at taste tests because it's sweeter and most people that sip it like it better. But of course, we don't just sip either drink in a restaurant or at home, and many of us prefer the less sweet Coke when it comes to drinking an entire glass. Misunderstanding this "tasting thin slice" caused the launch of the sweeter "New" Coke, which was a financial disaster prompting a relaunch of the old recipe, "Classic" Coke.

The final chapter, entitled "Seconds in the Bronx," shows the fatal dangers of certain types of thin slicing, and how they can be overcome with experience. A small black guy in a bad neighborhood stands casually as an unmarked police car full of white officers passes by. At least one policeman makes a key and false assumption: This weedy kid must have a reason to be confident in this bad location, he's probably armed, and he could be a lookout for a robbery. When they approach him, the police are nervous and the kid is petrified; he doesn't realize they're the police. He runs, the police pursue. He tries to pull out his wallet, the police think it's a gun and, 41 shots later, he's riddled with holes and is dead.

Gladwell says that, under extreme stress, police officers (and the rest of us) behave somewhat like autistic people, incapable of taking nonverbal cues from circumstances. The inexperience of the officers, the adrenaline from fear and the chase, makes them act without noticing that the kid's face is full of fear, not aggression.

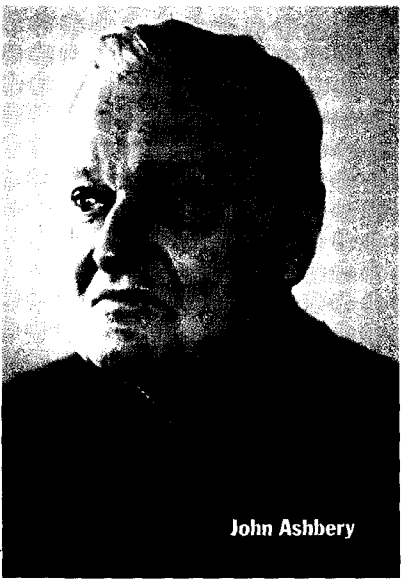
Blink is must reading because it's a great book, and because everyone else will have read it. If nothing else, it will make you think about contempt in every relationship you've ever had. ♦

A Poet in Winter

A fine-tuned hand sketches the contours of memory.

BY R. ANDREW NEWMAN

Every biographical entry for John Ashbery includes the name of W.H. Auden. It was Auden who gave the newcomer's career a powerful send-off when he selected his second book of poems, *Some Trees*, for the Yale Younger Poets Series. Twenty-three collections of poetry and five decades later, the younger poet has grown gray, but the same question of 1956 is asked in 2005. The cadences and wordplay delight, but do the poems make any sense?



HarperCollins

John Ashbery

Where Shall I Wander
New Poems
by John Ashbery
Ecco / HarperCollins, 81 pp., $22.95

William Arrowsmith, neither sharing Auden's high estimation of the younger poet's talents nor joining the general chorus of praise for *Some Trees*, simply couldn't make heads or tails of it. "What," he maintained, "does come through is an impression of an impossibly fractured world, depersonalized and discontinuous, whose characteristic emotional gesture is an effete and cerebral whimsy."

With his latest collection, *Where Shall I Wander*, some moments call Arrowsmith's judgment to mind or, to borrow the question posed by another exegete, "Kenneth, what is the frequency?" The words breeze by in a chatty stream of consciousness, and a line in this volume—"Sometimes I think it's all one big affectation"—may prompt readers to nod in agreement. Or: *Yes, I / can think of a number of things which would surprise you if you knew / the soundtrack.* Where might we find it? As readers familiar with Ashbery might expect, there are also times his wordplay becomes too cute, as when he'll "render unto caesura," though I have to admit to a guilty pleasure in such verbal frolicking.

And yet these missteps do not accurately epitomize his latest outing. These are the fine-tuned poems of an old man, even if we can't hum unfailingly along with the soundtrack. At 77, Ashbery remains playful and even whimsical. But a haunting quality pervades the collection. We listen as the speaking voice sifts through memories, trying to make sense of what happened. All the while present and past refuse to remain still, and the voice grapples with that perennial theme of life and, thus, literature and mutability.

For / time, and this is where it gets really nasty, he writes in the title poem "Where Shall I Wander," *remembers all*

R. Andrew Newman writes and teaches English in Nebraska.

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of us, / recognizes us making allowances for our changed appearances and greets / us familiarly by name, only occasionally mixed up (thought it / does happen). In those mix-ups, the present is likely to affix itself to reveries of the past in curious ways: *So who's to blame us for signing off on our agenda and / sinking into a cozy chair, accepting the proffered sherry and sighing for / a time when things really were easier and more people were alive. That, / and Jack's tattoo.*

The old saw has it that wisdom comes with age. Here, too, Ashbery doesn't disappoint, as we come upon lines brimming with insight, *The ocean filling in for us. Too many / vacant noon empires, without them you can't rule a hemisphere or be sated other than watching. Our TV brains sit around us all brave / and friendly, like docile pets. We get by by tweaking.* This damning aphorism is so true that, perhaps, a successful life can be measured by how much distance we put between it and ourselves.

Ashbery's "Lost Footage" provides a telling and powerful sampling of the volume.

The curving path escorts us
to Armida's pavilion. The enchantress.
She had everything built slightly smaller
than life size, as you'll find
if you sit in the chair at that table.

No matter how old we are, the child in us never goes away, that awkward self, when things are too big and soon our old things too small. Our memories are similar. Do we still fit them? Do they fit us?

We can't mask the anxiety for long,
but we can produce good and cherishable deeds
to be ransacked by those who come after us.
True, no one visits anymore.
I used to think it was because of him, now
I think it's because of him and us.
We grow more fragile at our posts,
interrogating vacant night. "Who goes there?"
And he goes, "Nay, stand and unfurl yourself."
I thought, in the corner, in the canyon,
in the cupboard, was something that seized me
in a terrible but approachable embrace.

Who we are and who we've been can seem terrible, measured against who we wanted to be, and they close upon us as though we are trapped in a corner, a canyon, or a cupboard. Still, all this has to be approachable. What other option is there in the vacant night with nothing to distract us?

Even though these poems clearly are through the eyes of an aged man, they never stoop to a confessional moan. It may be the very fuzziness of some of the images, as they go in and out of focus, which distances us from the overly personal. Our attention, instead, is drawn to the mountain peaks, the contours of the memories, the occasional oddity, and, as readers, we're richer for the experience.

It is fitting for a poet of Ashbery's stature to include poems on poetry. In "Sonnet: More of Same," I suppose we could say he's waving his flag when there's little of a sonnet to be found: *Try to avoid the pattern that has been avoided, / the avoidance pattern.* But there's more to this poem. It speaks to why readers (as well they should) pick up *Where Shall I Wander*—or any poem, for that matter. *It's like practicing a scale: At once different and never the same. / Ask not why we do these things. Ask why we find them meaningful. / Ask the cuckoo transfixed in mid-flight / between the pagoda and the hermit's rococo cave. He may tell you.* ♦

'The Interpreter'

Sydney Pollack's latest is thrillingly preposterous.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Thirty years ago, Sydney Pollack made *Three Days of the Condor*, a complicated thriller about a conspiracy inside the Central Intelligence Agency that unravels because of an unanticipated slip-up. An innocent CIA employee played by Robert Redford is out of the office—a Manhattan townhouse in which he and his colleagues do nothing but read books and newspapers in an effort to collect what is now called "open source intelligence"—getting coffee when everybody he works with is assassinated. The conspirators decide to pin the crime on Redford, who must work to stay ahead of the assassins and try to figure out what happened so that he can clear his name and save his life.

Three Days of the Condor is dated in many ways—from its CIA-is-the-root-of-all-evil plotline to its worshipful treatment of the *New York Times* to a misguided sex scene between Redford and Faye Dunaway that might have seemed "adult" in 1975 but now comes across as an act of rape. But it's still one of the most gripping movies ever made, a masterpiece of tension and intrigue. Pollack does a brilliant job of unfolding the conspiracy so that it seems plausible—the crucial quality of any successful political thriller—and sets an unforgettable mood that mixes rueful melancholy with nerve-wracking anxiety.

Three Days of the Condor established Pollack as a major director. In the early 1980s, he made both *Tootsie*, one of the great American comedies, and the lovely *Out of Africa*, for which he won an Oscar. At the same time, Pollack began an unexpected second career as a character actor due to his hilarious, self-directed turn as a perplexed show-biz agent in *Tootsie*. He seems to have devoted much of his post-Oscar energy to performing, directing four movies over the past 20 years—only one of which, *The Firm*, was any good.

So it was exciting news last year

John Podhoretz is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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Universal Studio / Phil Bray

Sean Penn, Nicole Kidman: dialogue in Ku

when Pollack, whose last directorial effort six years ago was a lugubrious romance called *Random Hearts*, announced his next film would be a political thriller called *The Interpreter*, set in New York and starring two extraordinary actors, Sean Penn and Nicole Kidman. Perhaps this would be a return to form for a director who once seemed like he might be the successor to Alfred Hitchcock.

The Interpreter has just opened, and throughout, Pollack tries hard to recapture the spirit and feel of *Three Days of the Condor*. Kidman plays a United Nations interpreter who, like Redford in the earlier film, gets inadvertently mixed up in a conspiracy when she overhears a conversation in an African dialect that suggests there will be an assassination attempt during a U.N. General Assembly convocation. Penn takes the Faye Dunaway part as a grief-stricken Secret Service agent who gets assigned to the case.

Like the earlier movie, it makes vivid and exciting use of unusual New York City settings: a bus stop in central Brooklyn, a side street in the East Village, and, most especially, the interiors of the United Nations headquarters on First Avenue. Apparently aware that he and his institution could use some favorable publicity, Kofi Annan granted Pollack unprecedented access to U.N. facilities, and in the course of the film, Kidman and Penn wander all over the joint. They have a tense conversation inside the General Assembly hall. Kidman gazes down at the hall from an actual interpreter's booth on the balcony. They have brisk conversations as they walk up and down the mammoth white hallways and staircases.

That's all very interesting, and those who might be concerned that the movie is a U.N. whitewash can take comfort in the fact that there's only one kumbaya moment. In the speech that surely won Pollack the privilege of filming at the United Nations, Kidman says she works there because her own bitter life experience has taught her that "words and compassion" are better than guns and killing. The fact is that Kidman is such a cold fish as an actress that she always seems more likely to spray people with bullets than shower them with love, and that undercuts the drippy sentiment.

Because the atmospherics are so good, *The Interpreter* has the makings of a wonderful thriller. The problem is that if you spend 30 seconds thinking about the elaborate plot at its heart, you realize that the movie makes absolutely no sense. The entire conspiracy depends on Nicole Kidman's character leaving a flute behind in her interpreter's booth so that she must return late at night to retrieve it. But how could the conspirators know she would leave a flute behind?

The implausibilities just keep stacking up. The Secret Service allows a senior aide to a genocidal African leader access to highly classified information, and even allows him to interrogate a key witness. On several occasions Kidman eludes the Secret Service, which is watching her 24 hours a day: once by sneaking out a fire escape, and once by driving a Vespa. We are asked to believe that her personal history—she was briefly a guerrilla in a West African nation and the lover of a guerrilla leader—would be unknown to the United Nations and the Central Intelligence Agency. We are also asked to believe that an African rebel leader in exile in New York, whose life is in danger, happily tells the *New York Post* that he just loves riding on public transportation in New York City and even names his favorite bus line.

Kidman and the conspirators are from a made-up African nation called Matobo that comes complete with a made-up tribal language called Ku. Both are handled quite well. But Pollack and his team also decided to invent a culture to go along with their made-up nation and language. And when Kidman starts up with the tribal wisdom of the Ku, the movie takes an extremely unfortunate turn. After awhile, Kidman begins to sound like Spock on *Star Trek*, offering Captain Kirk the wisdom of old Vulcan sayings. For example: When two people can't agree, Kidman tells Penn, the Ku say they stand on opposite sides of the river. Penn nods sagely, as if to say, "Wow, heavy."

Even more stunning is the Ku perspective on killing. Kidman explains that if the family members of a murder victim pursue vengeance, the Ku say they will spend the rest of their life in mourning. But if they forgive, they will find healing. *The Interpreter* offers a startling anthropological breakthrough. It proves that African tribal culture actually descends from a single source: a very enlightened yoga instructor somewhere in Marin County.

Sydney Pollack wants *The Interpreter* to be a tough-minded political thriller. But how can a movie be tough-minded when, at its core, it's basically just a Chinese fortune cookie that takes two hours to eat? ♦

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Pretty Bad Goods

Shop A Prairie Home Companion *till you drop.*

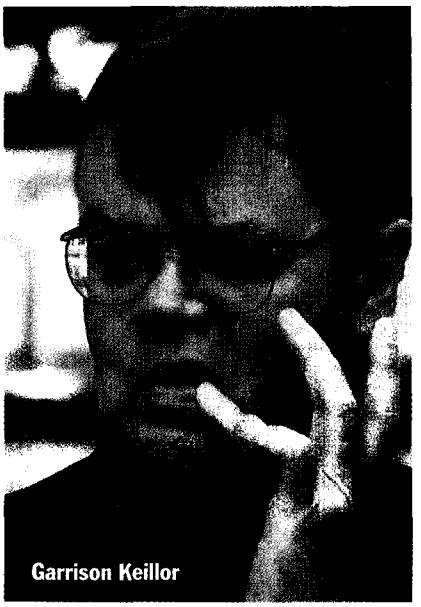
BY JOE QUEENAN

Not long ago, the belligerently-mannered New York radio personality Jonathan Schwartz confided in his listeners that he could not go on living without being able to hear Frank Sinatra's memorable version of "Our Love Is Here to Stay" at least one more time.

I have to admit that the unforgettable selection in question may have been "Embraceable You" or "Softly As I Leave You"—memory fails me. What caught my attention here was not the deejay's predictable, self-congratulatory homage to the obviously great (let the public be damned; I'm still in Johann Sebastian Bach's corner!) nor even his manicured sincerity. Rather, it was the obstreperously precious quality to the comment: I, Jonathan Schwartz, having long ago pledged my fealty to the chairman of the board, could not possibly go on living without being able to hear one of his priceless recordings at least one more time.

This is what set Schwartz apart from ordinary mortals in Totowa and Council Bluffs and Chechnya and the Sudan: They could probably manage quite well without Frank, Billie, Tony, Bing, or Ella. But not Jonathan. Oh no, not Jonathan. Jonathan just couldn't go on breathing without Frank.

Having clearly established his own unassailable status as one who danced to the beat of a different drummer, Schwartz next launched into a fulsome paean to the high priest of idiosyncrasy: Garrison Keillor. Apparently, Keillor had recently appeared at a black-tie function attired in the requisite monkey suit, but purely to establish his countercultural bona fides and *épater le bourgeois*, Keillor had topped off the ensemble with a pair of lurid red sneakers. And it was this insouciant touch that prompted Schwartz to rhapsodize about the subversive subtext implicit in the donning of such



Garrison Keillor

garish footwear. Red sneakers at a black-tie function! Such cheek! Such sassiness! Imagine the chagrin of the multitudinous suits, marooned in their black wing-tips!

Oh yes, once again, the flabbergasted *bourgeois* were in for a good, sound *epater*-ing.

Of course, it wasn't just that Keillor wore idiotic, inappropriate, anachronistic sneakers that so impressed Schwartz. No, it was that the sneakers were worn—nay, sported—in such a casual, matter-of-fact fashion, as befat the Laird of Lake Wobegon. Not for Keillor was any of that ersatz, calculated mutinousness that one associates with roguish billionaires, insolent pop stars, and other faux iconoclasts. No, in the world according to Garrison Keillor, this gesture was entirely *sui generis*: Nothing could be more natural than turning up at a black-tie function sporting stupid red sneakers. For Keillor was nothing if not a maverick. And mavericks wore red sneakers.

Though the reader may detect an undercurrent of malice in the preceding paragraphs, I can truthfully say that I have nothing against the nation's designated imps, no axe to grind with the professionally precious. What does concern me is when the elfin charm and general wig-waggishness that we all associate with *A Prairie Home Companion* begins to spread into the general populace. Fanciful whimsiness of the National Public Radio variety is a vital element in this society and, so long as it is handled exclusively by seasoned professionals with extensive experience in the realm of the overweaningly twee, the MacroMaverick poses no threat to the commonweal. But when premeditated affectation begins to spread at the micro level, when amateur lone wolves begin to infest our towns and churches and schools and neighborhoods with their stage-managed coyness—frequently manifested in their footwear—then there is cause for concern.

This is why I was so troubled when I stumbled upon the *Pretty Good Goods* catalog, published by American Public Media Group. The catalog, replete with quintessential *Prairie Home Companion*-type merchandise, is for all intents and purposes the J. Crew catalog of choreographed cuteness. Apparently, it has been around for some time, but like a number of exotic viruses, has been keeping a relatively low profile.

It is quite a document. Here is the Norlender Traditional Norwegian Sweater, a macabre, snow-flake-adorned, orange-and-black pastiche perhaps designed to make middle-aged white men look even more ridiculous in the eyes of young African Americans. Here are the Wash Away Your

Joe Queenan is author, most recently, of Queenan Country: A Reluctant Anglophile's Pilgrimage to the Mother Country.

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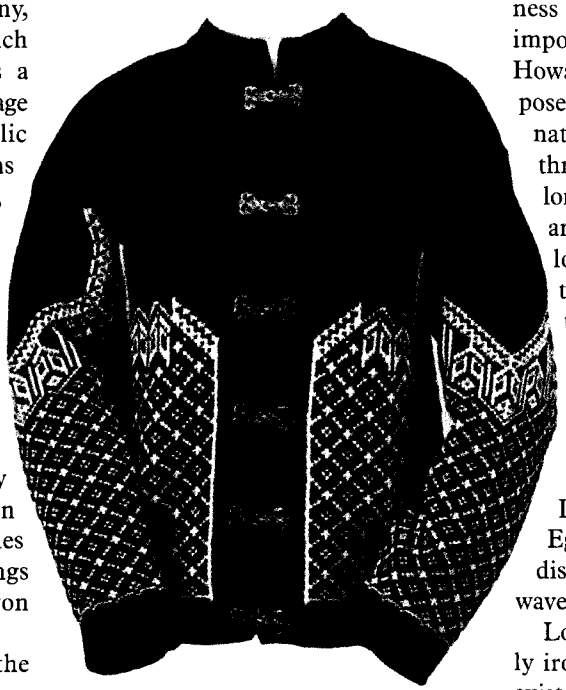
Sins Soap and Hand Cleaner, the Church Potluck Supper Cookbook and Personalized Stoneware Dish, the American Duct Tape Council Embroidered Denim Shirt. And here, of course, are the Animal Tracks Walking Stick, the Hummingbird Balance Toy, Vanilla and Chocolate Scented Cow Soaps, My Granny's Purse Book, and the Navy Blue Reader's Wrap.

None of them are cheap. What's so great about that? you may ask. Well, nobody ever said any of this stuff was great. We merely said it was pretty good. Get it?

The one-stop shopping center for pre-fab disingenuousness, push-button puckishness, and mail-order irony, *Pretty Good Goods* also purveys such Machiavellianly cloying items as a book of Dirt Farmer Wisdom, Vintage Typewriter Key Jewelry, the Gaelic Welcome sign and the Garden Jeans Rain Gauge. They're so lame, they're cool! They're not great; they're just pretty good! Nor will those in the market for sappy, homespun, horrible music be disappointed. The catalogue also features such classics of negative hipness as Dan Newton's Café Accordion Orchestra Live!, The Kingston Trio 45th Anniversary Tribute, and Songs of the Cat, on which Keillor himself warbles through 16 feline celebrating songs with fading opera star Frederica von Stade.

And then, of course, there is the Victor Borge Collectors Set. For those born too recently to be apprised of his myriad crimes, Borge was a clownish though not especially funny musician—a defrocked concert pianist—who plied his trade by butchering the classics on national television, thus making high art seem stupid. In his time, he was viewed by young people as just as potent a menace to America's sanity and self-image as Sammy Davis Jr., Lawrence Welk and his Champagne Music Makers, Ozzie and Harriet, the Ray Conniff Singers, Percy Faith, Ferrante & Teicher, and the cast of *Gilligan's Island*. But that was before his work was exhumed and rescued via the countercultural Heimlich maneuver of irony. Americans are justifiably concerned about Internet websites that offer inexpensive downloads of programs teaching ordinary people how to devise computer viruses. They are always up in arms about books and magazines detailing how to assemble atomic weapons. Where, then, is the outcry against the publication and dissemination of *Pretty Good Goods*?

Viruses are insidious and nuclear weapons are hideous, but those that create them are widely viewed as outcasts and madmen, not as part of the warp and woof of society. But fifth-column publications such as *Pretty Good Goods* eat away at the bulwarks of



democracy from within. They sap our will to be hip, well-dressed, and cool; they transmit the subliminal message that preening dorkiness is an acceptable lifestyle. They encourage Baby Boomers to be even more annoying than they already are: First it was your music, then it was your politics, then it was your McMansions, and now it's your 100 percent Norwegian-crafted snow flake sweaters. God, does your generation suck!

To be perfectly honest, I don't believe that Keillor, author of *Homegrown Democrat*, which preaches the self-hagiographical "politics of kindness," became associated with the enterprise because he thought he was going to get rich off it. No, I suspect that Keillor's true motivation for putting out this insidious catalogue is to spread the gospel of postmodern cutey-piedness by way of a seemingly innocuous mechanism. By persuading the public that dumb is smart, that bad is good, that lame is hip, that corny is cutting-edge, Keillor hopes to plant the seeds of jejuneness and turn everyone in this country into a dink. That way, the Democrats might finally win an election.

I don't like it. I don't like it even one bit. I think the FCC, or the Better Business Bureau, or the Small Business Administration, or somebody important should look into this. Howard Stern and Janet Jackson may pose clear and present threats to our national morals, but they pose no threat to our national dignity. Keillor and his band of merry mavericks are another story entirely. If catalogues such as this ever fall into the hands of our kids, and our teenaged children (already culturally predisposed toward knee-jerk seditiousness) begin adorning their rooms with World War I propellers, bronze miner's lamps, Love Is Where You Find It posters, and Scented Hen and Egg Soaps, our entire society could disappear overnight beneath a tidal wave of tongue-in-cheekiness.

Looking on the bright side, in a truly ironic bit of ironic irony, the very existence of a catalogue such as *Pretty Good Goods* could ultimately be self-defeating, sabotaging precisely those re-social engineering projects that the red-sneaker crowd are most enamored of. For if "rebels" like Garrison Keillor are serious about issues like gun control, they must one day wise up to the fact that the American people will never willingly surrender their firearms so long as someone out there is selling Kingston Trio 45th Anniversary Tribute CDs. There is only so far the American people can be pushed; the Kingston Trio is far enough.

To paraphrase a famous American: millions for defense; not one cent for Kingston Trio tribute. ♦

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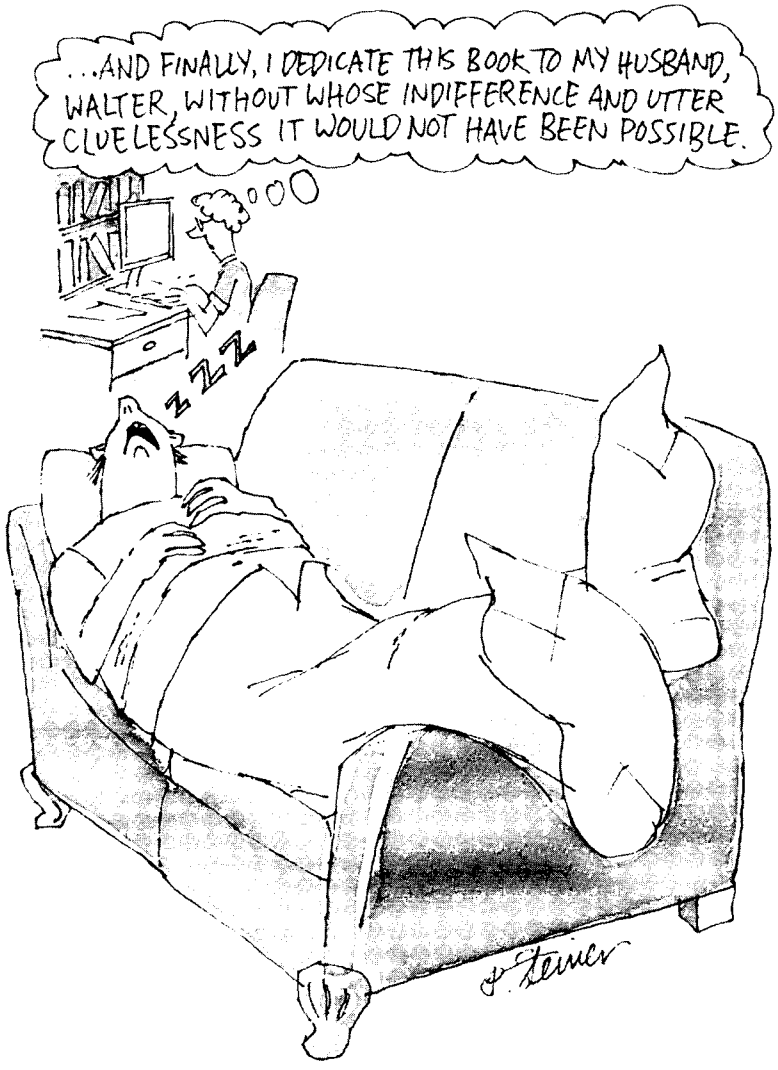
Great Moments in Acknowledgments



Peter Steiner

It's said that, in Washington, the typical book buyer turns to the index first to look for his name. But discerning readers now have a new destination: The acknowledgments. A generation ago, acknowledgments, if there were any at all, consisted largely of grants of permission and thanks to librarians. Today they might cover a multitude of pages, allowing authors to pay homage to agents and stockbrokers, list their friends and ex-teachers, tell heartwarming anecdotes, and generally indulge Baby Boomer self-infatuation.

Beginning this week, as a service to readers, THE WEEKLY STANDARD will offer (as space allows) some of the more entertaining specimens that cross our desk. Readers are encouraged to alert us to their favorite samples of this new, as yet unheralded, literary device at Books & Arts, THE WEEKLY STANDARD, 1150 17th St., NW, Washington, DC, 20036 or email *acknowledge@weeklystandard.com*

Without further ado, our inaugural gem:

"What can I say about my editor at Riverhead, Sean McDonald? His new editing technique is unstoppable! I don't think there's a page in this book that wasn't improved by some comment or query of his, and deeply appreciate his willingness to let the book evolve out of the form it took in the original proposal. Thanks to the whole Riverhead team—especially Julie Grau, Cindy Spiegel, Larissa Dooley, Kim Marsar, Liz Connor, and Meredith Phebus—for welcoming me into the fold, and giving me the support and encouragement I needed.

"This is the first book I've written from start to finish in our new home in Brooklyn, and so I want to acknowledge the whole supporting cast that makes up the urban oasis that is Park Slope: our many neighborhood friends who dropped by unexpected to save me from a paragraph that couldn't quite find its way to closure; the coffee at Tea Lounge and Naidre's (and yes, Starbucks—everything bad truly is good for you); the hundreds—or thousands—of people who make Prospect Park the perfect spot for an afternoon stroll away from the keyboard; the kids banging away at the study door, demanding some quality time with the computer (and if necessary, with Dad too); and most of all, my wife, who makes so much of the beauty and happiness of our life possible.

"But this one is for my agent, Lydia Wills, who has been in the ring with me for ten years now, and who believed in the book when even I had begun to lose faith. If she hadn't become such a superstar over those ten years I might feel as though I owed her something. As it is, I'm just happy she still returns my phone calls."

From Steven Johnson's
Everything Bad Is Good For You
(Riverhead Books)

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OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT,
DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, AND SENIOR ADVISOR

CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM

TO: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: KARL
DATE: APRIL 19, 2005
RE: PERSONNEL

As anticipated, we ran into no more trouble with the College of Cardinals than we did with the Governing Board of the World Bank over Paul (and, I must say, less than the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is giving us over John). Once the doors were closed, we informed the Conclave that you wanted Ratzinger. Naturally, there was a certain amount of shock, especially among the EU cardinals: R. is "divisive," R. has an "infallibility complex," etc.

As we expected, the first ballot was not favorable. Immediately after, however, we buttered up the French cardinals. We indicated through intermediaries that in an R. papacy, the Swiss Guard halberds will say "Fabriqué en France." The French cardinals, I'm told, began praising R.'s "refreshingly multipolar" perspective.

Meanwhile, as scheduled, Ann Coulter appeared on the cover of Time last week. The next element of our sequencing here is Sen. Frist's "nuclear option." Once that goes forward, we can instruct Rehnquist to make his announcement. We anticipate a "search" period of three days before you introduce Coulter as the first woman Chief Justice. (NB: no peck on her cheek; the Condi kiss polled well among Southern males 21-44, but support among women was soft, and we think that without the "diversity" backstop we had with Condi, a Coulter buss would be a net negative with that group.)

May I urge you to give serious consideration to the question of the Kofi Annan succession. I think we should finalize Rumsfeld before Oil-for-Food gets out of hand.

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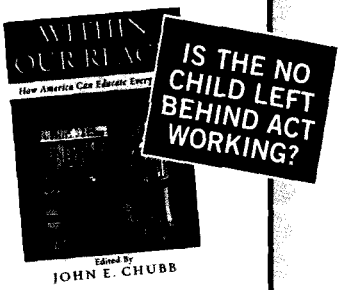
Lifting School Standards

FROM THE
KORET TASK ON K–12 EDUCATION



WITHIN OUR REACH
How America Can Educate Every Child

Edited by John E. Chubb

A midterm assessment of NCLB that closely examines its core elements and offers recommendations for practical reforms to save the law and strengthen its key principles.

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Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

On January 8, 2002, President Bush signed into federal law the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. The act assists the states in raising K–12 student achievement. Under the law, NCLB requires states, if they are to retain the federal contribution to their education budgets, to improve their academic standards and achievement results. To attain the standards, schools can align their curricula and tests to reflect state standards. Required public reporting of results helps citizens and educators monitor the degree of progress each school makes.

Such accountability has already led to higher achievement at many schools across all socioeconomic levels. But many challenges lie ahead. Under NCLB guidelines, schools that fail to make "adequate yearly progress" must report their status to their students' parents. Eventually, a school may be closed, the staff replaced, and the parents choose to send their children to successful schools. Principals, teachers, and other staff face closer scrutiny and consequences of their performance.

States vary in the quality and rigor of their school standards. To enable policymakers and others to know where their state stands, NCLB requires each state to participate in National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessments. NAEP not only measures student achievement in reading and mathematics but also includes writing, science, and additional subjects. Early comparisons show that many states have much lower standards than NAEP's national proficiency standards, allowing policymakers and others to call for higher standards to encourage better performance in their states.

The NCLB requirements have already had positive effects, but it has become apparent that several improvements can be made. The NCLB law and most states only require progress in reading, language arts, and mathematics. Although these subjects are perhaps the most important, both in their own right and as tools, they hardly constitute all the knowledge and skills students should acquire; progress in science, civics, and geography, for example, should be required.

Furthermore, NCLB requires progress in "proficiency," often defined as sufficient knowledge and skills to succeed at the next grade level. Some students, however, are already a grade level or more ahead, and some have little prospect of attaining proficiency in a given year. Poorly performing schools may concentrate their efforts on only those students that perform just under the proficiency requirement and neglect those far ahead and far behind the proficiency standard. For this reason, reporting progress at the levels of basic, proficient, and advanced should be required.

Finally, tests can be administered more than once a year. **Tests are one of the cheapest and most effective means of raising achievement.** They enable policymakers, school boards, educators, parents, and students to assess progress and to revise plans according to results. Most business firms compile quarterly results; some of the more successful companies compile daily reports. Computer programs now allow quick assessments, instant scoring, and detailed reporting. Policymakers should consider using computers to expedite the collection and usefulness of information on school progress.

A longer version of this piece can be found in *Within Our Reach: How America Can Educate Every Child,* edited by John E. Chubb.

—Herbert J. Walberg

Herbert J. Walberg is a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution; a member of Hoover's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education; and a contributing author to Within Our Reach: How America Can Educate Every Child.

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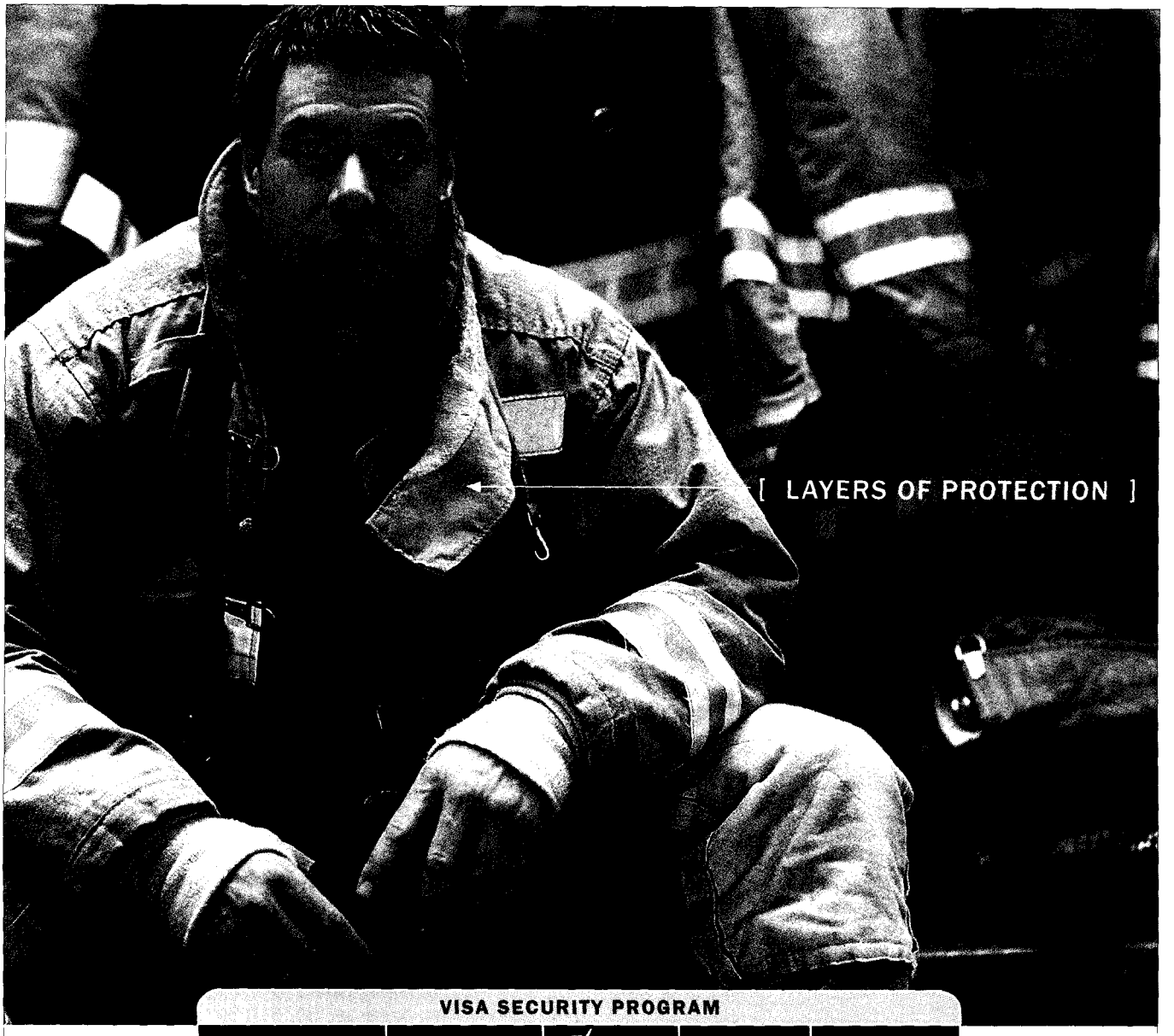

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